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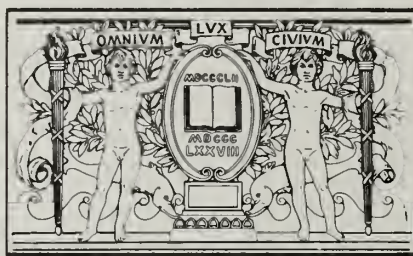
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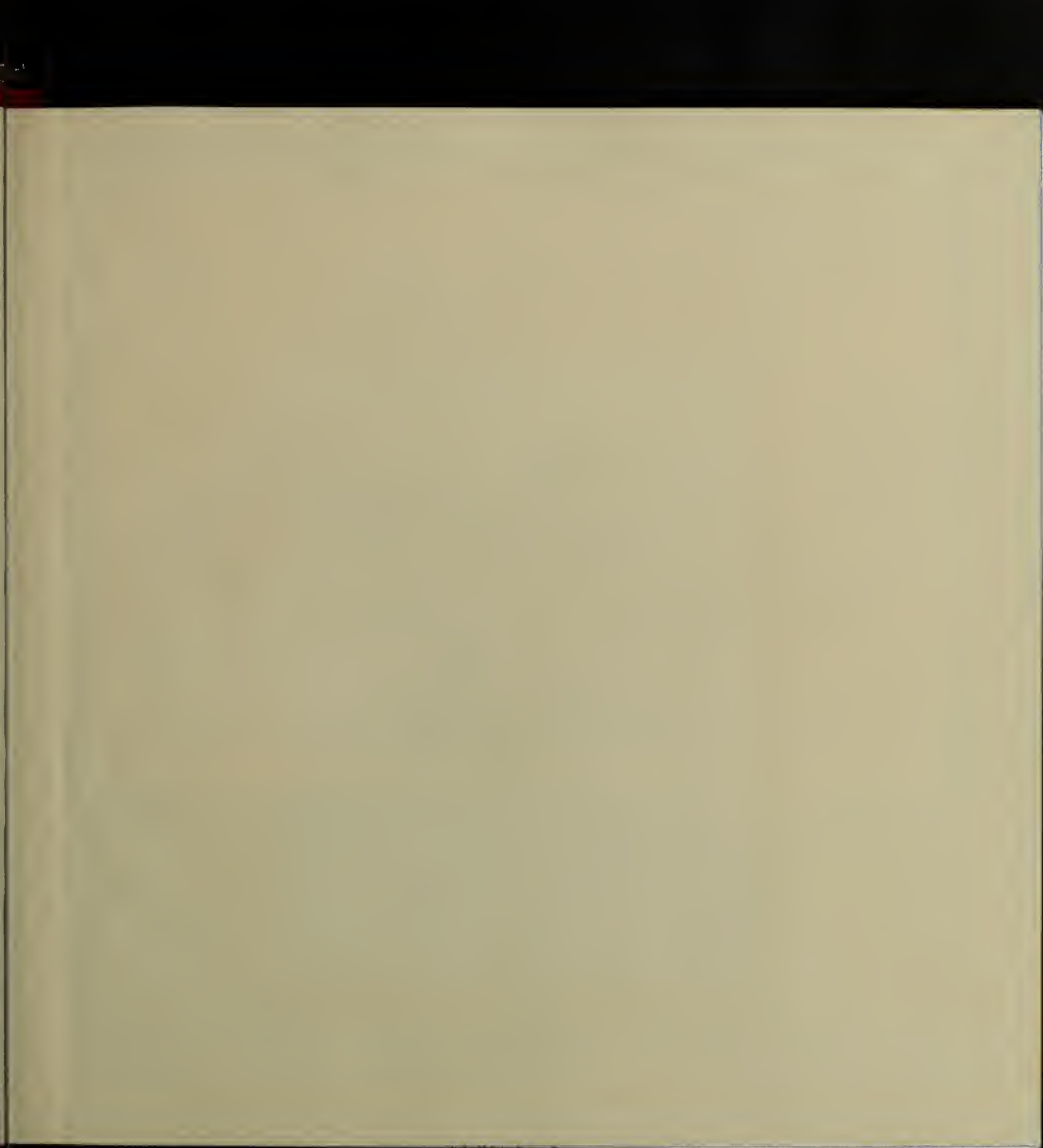
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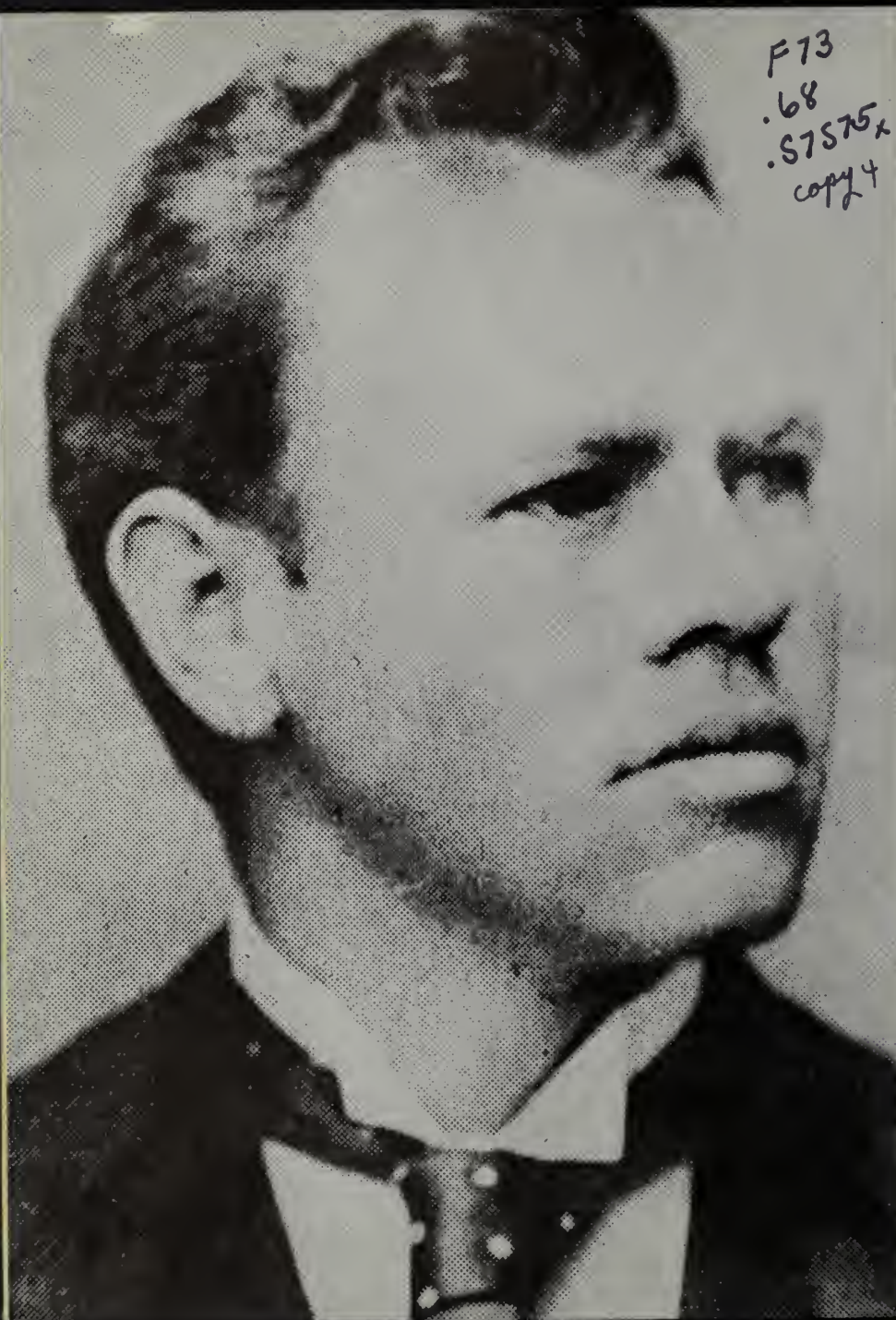




South Boston



BOSTON 200 NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY SERIES



HENRY ADAMS, the nineteenth century philosopher, said that the history of America is not the history of the few, but the history of the many. The people of Boston's neighborhoods have accepted the challenge of Adam's statement to produce "people's histories" of their own communities.

Hundreds of Bostonians formed committees in each of fifteen neighborhoods of the city, volunteering their time over the past year and a half to research in libraries, search for photographs, produce questionnaires, transcribe tapes, assist in writing and editing, most important, act as interviewers and subjects of "oral history" research. These booklets are not traditional textbook histories, and we have not attempted to cull a statistical sample. We have simply talked with our neighbors, people who remember, sometimes with fondness, sometimes with regret, but always with wisdom. For each of us has his or her own story to tell, and these stories are vital to the development of our neighborhoods and our city.

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Boston 200 is the city's official program to observe the Bicentennial of the American Revolution from April 1975 through December 1976.

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S O U T H B O S T O N

SOUTH BOSTON, it has been said, is more than a neighborhood: it is a state of mind. An almost mystical quality distinguishes the area and binds its residents in a network of intense loyalties. Asked where they come from, whether they be in downtown Boston, Calcutta, or South Bend, natives will always reply "South Boston" or "Southie" rather than Boston, New England or even America.

South Bostonians use the adjective "proud" often to describe their feelings. They share a nostalgic pride for a place like no other, whose atmosphere is more akin to an intimate village than a crowded city.

Part of the district's character stems from its physical isolation. South Boston is a peninsula. Before 19th century landfill, a narrow isthmus connected it to the mainland, and then only at low tide. At high tide the area became an island. Early settlers attending church in Dorchester often had to spend the night with friends there, if the minister preached an over-long sermon. And Indians who once lived here were forced to wait until low tide to draw their water, for their fresh water spring was covered by incoming waves.

The peninsula carried a special significance for native Americans who called it "Mattapanock." A fa-

vorite, possibly even sacred, Indian meeting-place was "Pow-Wow Point" (near the "horseshoe" at the foot of K Street), where their spring was located. Until the 19th century, the Indians held a celebration there every year to commemorate an important treaty. Most of the natives, however, had disappeared before white settlers arrived. An epidemic of smallpox, or perhaps measles, brought by the first Englishmen to land in New England, killed them off. The few who survived moved to other places, returning only for their annual feast. Some of the older people living in South Boston at the turn of the century remembered the yearly rituals and the Indians who camped on E Street, near Sixth, as late as the 1830s.

Early South Boston was part of Dorchester. In a sense, it was the reason for Dorchester's settlement. When the group of Puritans who sailed to America on the *Mary and John* in 1630 sent a scouting party to choose their homesite, the advance group sighted a deserted grassy peninsula, with several high hills and a protected harbor. They decided this "Mattapanock" would make a perfect pasture and the area across the bay (now Dorchester), a fortifiable spot for homes and

FRONT COVER: *Farragut Beach, c. 1910*

INSIDE COVER: *James Brendan Connolly, author of sea-adventure novels and winner of first gold medal of modern Olympics for Hop, Skip, and Jump, in 1897*

farms. So they came to Dorchester "because there is a neck fit to keep cattle on."

The colonists re-named the peninsula "Dorchester Neck" and used it as a common pasture for the first decade of Dorchester's existence. It was easy to control the cows there because they could not stray off and needed only a narrow fence (around present Andrew Square) to pen them in.

Colonists owned the land in common until their population and numbers of cattle increased to the point where townspeople had to define exclusive rights to avoid confusion and unfriendly disputes. Only the elite of Dorchester could put their cows on the peninsular pasture. They limited the number of cattle and forbade pigs and hogs.

The first to build a house on "the Pasture" was probably Deacon James Blake, who lived where Farragut Road is now. Settlers did not follow Blake in droves. By the time of the Revolution, there were only a dozen families living on Dorchester Neck. They had cleared a few roads, most of them actually "cuts across lots"; paths were named by their destinations. The present Dorchester Street was "the Way to the Castle." A traveler could turn off that road onto "the Way to the Nook," which led toward the area of Gillette's and Sts. Peter and Paul Church; this was also called "The Way to Mr. Foster's." One could follow "the Way to go down to the Beach," or "The Way to Powwow Point," or bypass along "The Way beside the Great Swamp," or the "Little Swamp," both at City Point.

There didn't seem to be any problem with traffic—the district was more important for protection than for settlement. Its twin hills (one the current Dorchester Heights, the other, now disappeared, around Story Street) on the east, and Nook and Leek Hills on the west offered lookout points and protection from both sea and land. The British saw the potential of the area and built a fort which they called "Castle William" on a nearby island. During Sons of Liberty demonstrations in Boston in the 1760s and 70s, Crown officials

and other Loyalists took refuge in the Castle when things got too tense in town. And, because of the closeness of the British fort, after Lexington-Concord, the few families living on the Neck moved to Dorchester for safety.

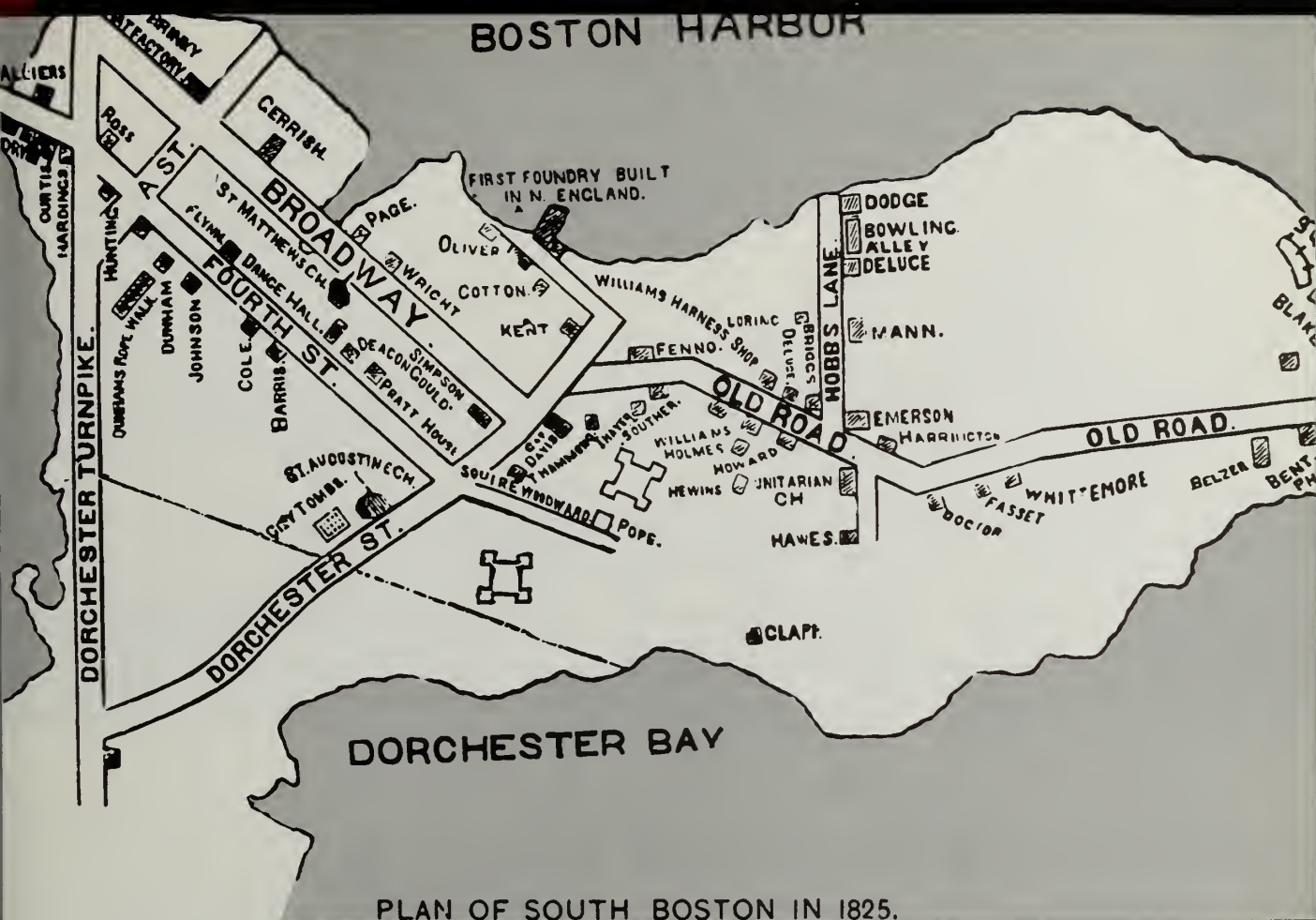
By the Revolution, colonists were well aware of the importance of the hills. Because they knew the land better than the British, they were able to surprise the Imperial Navy in one of the cleverest moves of the war. In the winter of 1776, Colonel Henry Knox and his soldiers moved cannons from Fort Ticonderoga in New York to Cambridge. General Washington devised a plan for the fortification of Dorchester Heights and Nook's Hill. In March, the Americans quietly built barricades and prepared barrels of stones atop Dorchester Heights (to be used to deter British soldiers from scaling the steep hill). In the dead of a cold, moonlit night, wagons, wheels covered with hay to deaden sound, moved the Ticonderoga cannons to the American redoubts. The English were caught by surprise and saw that the Americans would soon surround their ships. After a brief cannonade, which killed only five men, the British troops left Boston forever.

The celebration of Evacuation Day eventually became the most important civic event in South Boston's calendar, conveniently coinciding with St. Patrick's Day. Generations of young boys would tell the story of the battle to any tourist willing to listen:

"... to Dorchester Heights where redoubts were built by the American troops, which compelled the evacuation of the British. The general in command was General John Sullivan of Wexford. The password was St. Patrick."

After the British evacuation, the farmers moved back to the neck and continued their bucolic lifestyle.

In 1804, however, the country ambiance of Dorchester Neck was shattered. A group of shrewd busi-



PLAN OF SOUTH BOSTON IN 1825.

nessmen from Boston recognized the real estate possibilities of the district. They knew Boston was ripe for expansion and saw the waterfront district to the south as the most convenient area for annexation. The speculators bought up extensive acreage on the peninsula during 1803, and, a year later, petitioned the Town of Boston to annex "Great Neck" (the eastern end of South Boston, excluding "Little Neck"—Washington Village and Old Harbor which joined the City in

1855.) Because the investors had acquired so much land, they outnumbered, overpowered, and outvoted the farming families who had been living in the district for generations. And, over intense protest from Dorchester and Dorchester Neck, they were able to annex the district to the larger town. The legality of this maneuver is open to question, since the speculators did not actually live in the district. Nevertheless, Boston's moneyed interests won the tug-of-war and Dorchester



South Boston Bridge, 1850's

lost its Neck. The town affirmed its control by re-naming the area "South Boston."

A condition of annexation was that Boston's selectmen lay out "all necessary streets, public squares and market places," so South Boston became one of the first planned communities in the country. The surveyor made a rectangular grid plan from north to south and east to west. The proprietors thought of naming streets after mayors of Boston, but since the still-growing town lacked enough mayors to cover all the streets, they settled on the alphabet instead, with the exception of the grand avenue of Broadway, Dorchester Street (the old "Way to the Castle"), Telegraph and Old Harbor. The blocks were made wide enough to allow for the later addition of narrow streets, such as Gold, Silver, Athens and Dresser, in back of the main ones.

The most important order of business was to provide easy access to Boston. So the new proprietors petitioned for a bridge. But the question of where to put the bridge, or whether residents on either side wanted a bridge at all, became a raucously provocative question. Bostonians indulged in what one local historian has called "the Dark Ages of the Bridge Question," one group dressing up as Indians to sabotage the other, meetings being disrupted and general havoc raised by all. Even then South Boston people, once having made up their minds, stuck passionately to their political opinions. The Bridge was eventually built, from Wind-Mill Point in Boston to the foot of B Street. (This structure and its successors have ever since spent long intervals "under repair.")

The Yankee speculators turned out to be clever

business people indeed, for, by 1845, the value of South Boston land had increased well over 450 percent, as population grew and factories moved into the district. Boston was still a "walking city," and with two bridges (the "South Boston Bridge" and the "Free Bridge"), residents of the peninsula could walk to work in town, or central town Bostonians to the new industries springing up in South Boston.

But the decade of annexation did not go entirely smoothly. During these years, South Boston was shocked by news of a cruel duel. One Sunday morning two men, Rand and Miller, crossed from Boston over the Neck to City Point. They had been close friends, but had become involved with the same lady, which had led to the challenge and the pistol duel. Rand wound up a corpse, and Miller eventually became a New York millionaire. Nobody recorded what happened to their woman friend.

A few years later, South Boston achieved notoriety once more, this time for an execution. Two men, convicted of piracy, were hanged at a gallows near the corner of C and Third Streets. Withstanding intense cold and frostbite, 10,000 people turned out to watch the hangman pull the rope—a strangely popular public event.

In this same period, South Boston again became a military outpost. During the second war with Britain, the War of 1812, Castle Island, renamed Fort Independence, served as a strategic lookout, but not without vexation to the peninsula's inhabitants. Simonds tells the story of soldiers who frequently stole "pigs, sheep, fowls, potatoes, turnips and, in a word, every thing they could obtain" from local farmers.

By the time the war was over, South Boston was evolving into an important industrial section and an elite residential area. At the turn of the century Mr. William Cains wrote of what the new district was like in his boyhood in the 1820s and 30s:

"The South Boston Association did their work

well and laid out a district that could not be excelled in the entire country. The residences were as handsome as could be, and were laid out with magnificent gardens on all sides, with elegant shade trees and numerous fruit trees.

From the close of the War of 1812 until the beginning of the Civil War, the manufactures so increased that South Boston was second to no place in the country in the way of industries."

South Boston's industry mushroomed after access to the town became convenient. Even before the first South Boston Bridge was built, the Dix and Brinley chemical works carried workmen from Boston in boats daily. Mr. Brinley built the first tenement in South Boston, around A Street, for his workers, naming it the "Brinley Block." Fishing was always a mainstay of the district's economy, and dockworkers built ships that made the peninsula well-known. South Boston was also famous for manufacturing machinery, as well as for its prestigious glassworks. Thomas Cains was the "father of the flint-glass business in the Atlantic States."

The district even got involved in the "Triangle Trade" through its molasses tanks and rum distilleries. Several iron foundries produced munitions and parts for steam engines and locomotives. A few descendants of these early industries are still in business.

One of the manufacturers to arrive later was the Gillette Company, which settled in the old Nook Hill area. The story of the company's founding, as Anna Morris, president of the South Boston Historical Society, says, "sounds like something out of the Arabian nights . . .

"A man named King Camp Gillette from Wisconsin always had the idea he could invent something. He tried many things. He tied in with a man in Baltimore who invented a little stopper for soda bottles. And one day that man said to him, 'King,

stop fooling around and think up something the public can use and throw away like my stopper. This way you will be successful and you will make money.' So Gillette kept thinking and applied this idea to many things and never seemed to get anywhere. This went on for many years. He was about 40 years old when he finally came up with the idea for the razor that we know as the Gillette razor."

King Camp Gillette told this story of his moment of inspiration:

"I was consumed with the thought of attempting something that people would use and throw away and buy again. And one particular morning when I started to shave I found my razor dull, not only dull, but it was beyond the point of successful stropping and it needed honing. As I stood there with the razor in my hand, my eyes resting on it as lightly as a bird's looking down on its nest, the Gillette razor was born. I saw it all in a moment and in that same moment many unvoiced questions were asked and answered more with the rapidity of a dream than by the slow process of reason."

What Gillette saw was a fine piece of steel clamped between two pieces of metal. It was the beginning of the American industrial policy of planned obsolescence. He started his business above a hardware store in 1905; his company now sells razor blades in the billions.

Long before King Gillette got his inspiration, South Boston had become an industrial center. Towards mid-19th century, as bridges were added and hills leveled to fill in the "South Boston Flats," the peninsula grew into a curious mixture of upper-class residences and laborers' tenements, wealthy Yankee investors and immigrant working people, smoky factories and elegant parks. The district's planners had intended its wide avenues as home for Boston's elite, seeking escape from the overcrowded city. But the filling in of

the Back Bay denied them realization of their dreams. The Paris-inspired streets and convenience of the in-town area over-shadowed the more countrified attractions of South Boston. Although it remained a favorite spot for outings and summer vacations, with a number of popular seaside hotels and a few ostentatious mansions, the vision of South Boston as an elite retreat never got a grasp on the Bostonian imagination.

Job opportunities in South Boston's thriving industries drew laborers from the city. Most were immigrants, and, in the 19th century, most were Irish. Working people first settled near their factories, in the western section of the district, which became known as the "Lower End" or sometimes "Little Galway."

There was another side to 19th century South Boston. Because of its isolation from the mainland, Boston used South Boston as a sort of social wastebasket. The city built on the peninsula its institutions for "undesirables." The tuberculosis and smallpox hospitals were located there, as well as the prison, "lunatic asylum," and "house of correction and industry" (the poorhouse). The peninsula's citizens were none too happy with their new neighbors. Some began to call City Point "Botany Bay" after the infamous Australian penal colony. Conditions in these institutions frightened Irish immigrants so much they said they "would sooner die in the streets" than go to South Boston. Once placed in any of these institutions, poor people found it very difficult to get out. They were separated from society and religion and felt in exile. Gradually all of these facilities were moved to less populated areas.

The Great Boston Fire of 1874 burned down the tenements of Fort Hill where the poorest of the Irish immigrants had lived. Many of the displaced came to South Boston for "temporary" housing and remained. The immigrants provided continuity with their old community by carrying stones and the bell from their Fort Hill Church to build their new church, St. Vincent's.



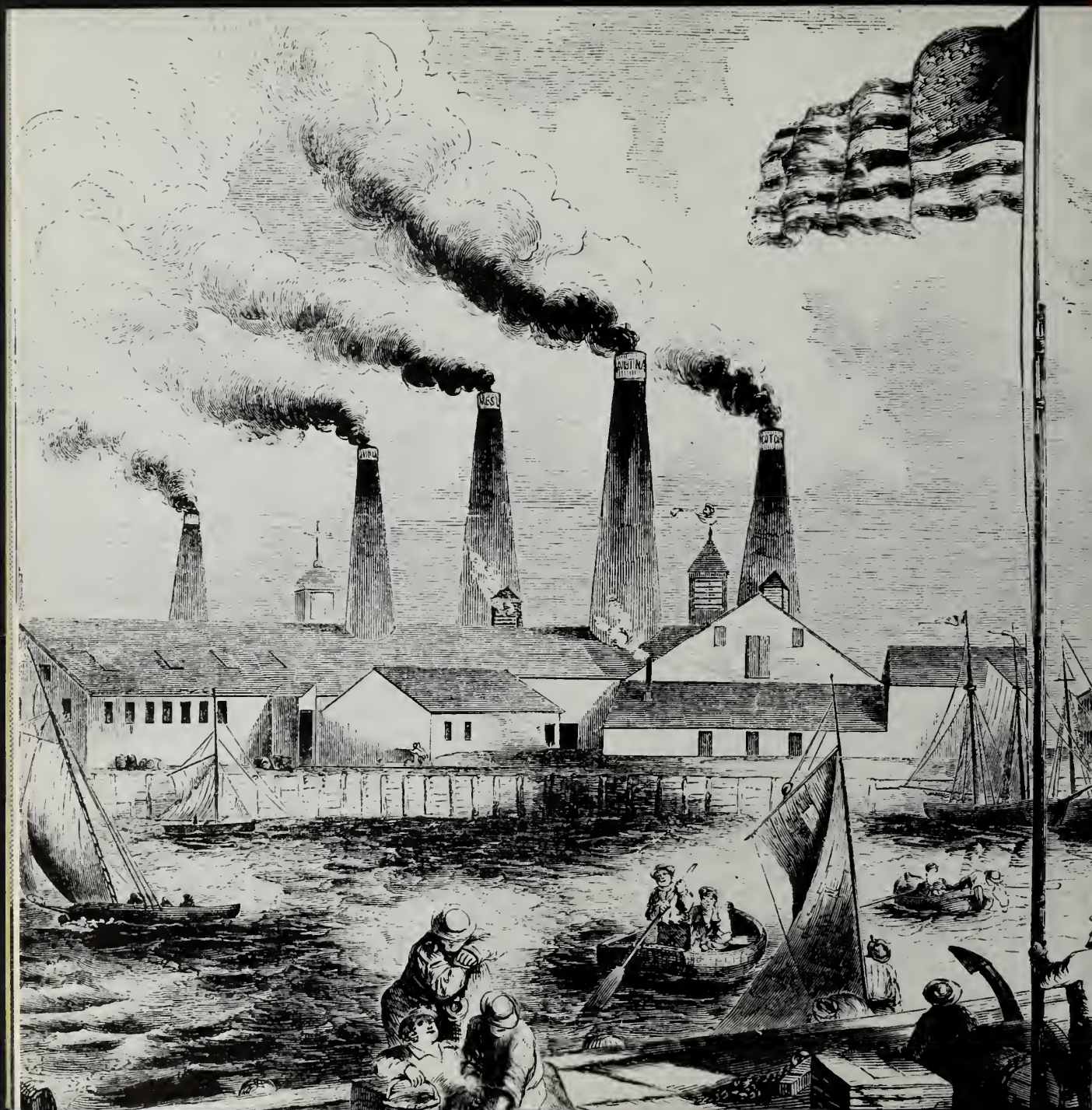
View from Telegraph Hill, 1859

Irish were not new to South Boston—there are Irish names on stones in St. Augustine's cemetery dating back to the 1820s. But the majority living in the district until the 1850s were Yankees and Protestants of comfortable means. Most felt no affinity for the Irish except as a source of cheap labor. Although in many parts of the city, the Yankees moved out as soon as Irish moved in, South Boston seems to have been a bit more cosmopolitan. Perhaps because the district was still young and resilient, the older residents adjusted to the immigrants. But it took many years to dispel stereotypes.

Before mid-century, anti-Irish jokes appeared regularly in the South Boston Gazette depicting Pat and Mike "straight from the Emerald Isle" as stupid, bumbling, gullible, ridiculous drunkards. Yankees bragged

that in their district there were "not so many foreigners (Irish) as in other wards of the City," and that "the foreigners who reside here, are, for the most part, of that better class who will not live in cellars, or congregate together closely in order to keep each other warm."

Articles in the local paper almost weekly warned against "Papism" and told of poor Irish widows duped by cunning and greedy clergy. The prejudices were stubborn in dying. The demonic spirit that burned the Charlestown convent existed, to a lesser degree, in South Boston. But the attitudes were buried by the sheer weight of numbers. The same paper that warned that Irish Catholics shouldn't be allowed to vote, proudly printed the number of births in the district that year. Of 628 babies born in 1847, 549 were of Irish



parentage. By the time those children grew up, South Boston was predominantly Irish, Catholic and Democrat, and the Irish jokes and anti-Catholic rhetoric had disappeared from the local press.

It was probably during this time that South Boston developed the stereotype it carries today of an Irish, working class, city neighborhood. It once was that, a long time ago, but not for very many years. The image has stuck, however. One Boston historian thinks the myth of the "South Boston Irish" began in the reality of laborers in the Lower End in the 1860s and 70s. Later the celebration of Evacuation Day and its coincidence with St. Patrick's Day added to the lore. And Boston's Irish politicians found it to their own advantage to perpetuate the mystique. But while there are more people of Irish heritage in South Boston than any other single nationality, South Boston has not had an Irish majority for most of this century.

Towards the end of the 1800s, large numbers of other immigrants began to move into the district. Like the Irish, all were fleeing political oppression. Prussian Poles came first in the "Little Immigration" of the 1850s. As Russian taxation and compulsory military service made life in Poland more difficult, larger numbers emigrated. By the 1890s, South Boston had a Polish church, Our Lady of Czestochowa (St. Mary's), with the Rev. John Chmielinski as pastor. The Germans arrived as early as the Irish, many working in South Boston's breweries and bakeries. In the 1880s and 90s a surging Lithuanian nationalism and Russian dominance brought many Lithuanians to America. South Boston became a center of Lithuanian life and cultural activity as Lithuanians established two churches in the district in quick succession.

In the early 1900s Italians entered the area, and Czechs and Slovaks followed. The Czechoslovakian Constitution of 1918 was partially written at the Czech Club on Columbia Road. One local resident remembers Jan Mazaryk, who was to be the first President of Czechoslovakia, sitting at her kitchen table with her

father and his friends arguing over the wording of the document, which they based on the U.S. Constitution. Later immigrations have brought people from Estonia and Latvia, Albania, Armenia, Russia, and in recent years, Greece and Puerto Rico. Most have come to escape political oppression.

As the 20th century began, South Boston was still "a hilly peninsula, thrust into the beautiful harbor like the arm of a combatant on guard." Several of its hills had been leveled for landfill, so it was no longer as isolated. But to get to South Boston, you still had to, at some point, go over a bridge. The district had become a cosmopolitan community with a diverse population of many ethnic groups and varied professions. It was characterized by strong religious traditions of many denominations. South Boston had sent the first Baptist missionary to Hawaii, and, in this century, was proud of a local boy who became a Cardinal and Archbishop of the Boston Archdiocese, Richard Cardinal Cushing. As a cousin of the late Cardinal notes, "Religious groups attracted more recruits from South Boston than from any other part of the country. We've had more people called to the religious life than any other community of this size."

South Boston once had two synagogues. The Jewish population were mostly Germans who either intermarried or moved out of the district. One resident remembers as a child, "'making the stove' for my Jewish neighbors on Saturday so they would have some heat and listening as the elderly grandfather said his prayers with his prayer shawl on." While it has lost its synagogues, South Boston still has more churches, Protestant and Catholic, than any other area of its size in America.

Twentieth-century South Boston, as writer Al Lupo says, became "the symbol of neighborhood, with all the poetry and parochialism inherent in the word." When long time residents talk about growing up in South Boston, a wistful smile often crosses their faces as they remember walks on Castle Island Bridge, rallies



St. Augustine's chapel and cemetery, the oldest Catholic cemetery in New England

at Flood Square, the kids they "hung with" on the corner, college ices at Joe's Spa, Miss Bayle's elocution classes.

They talk fondly of the attractiveness of their peninsula. The beaches are the scene of many childhood memories: "I never understood what children in other

places did all summer, if they didn't spend all day at the beach." There are a few who remember the old Reservoir where South Boston High is now, and others who recall the Thursday night dances at Castle Island when the Irish "living-in" girls walked over the wooden bridge on their evening out. Many a romance grown to a Golden Anniversary began on those Thursday nights. Around the time of the First World War there were pageants in Marine Park with dances and foods of many nationalities. And about that time Billy Sunday, the evangelist, set up his tent and attracted great numbers of curious spectators. During that war, many foods were scarce—sugar cost over a dollar a pound—and one resident remembers:

"I was a victory boy—in seventh grade. There were victory gardens set and victory boys were supposed to earn money to help service agencies. Earn five dollars some way. We'd contribute piecemeal to school. The teacher would mark it down and you got a little button to wear that you helped."

In South Boston, as everywhere else, Prohibition was circumvented by a few citizens. Some remember people ("not my family, of course") boating out to Rainsford Island, where currents washed up bootlegged cargoes dumped overboard as the Coast Guard boat approached. And one native told about his father's cellar still. All this while South Boston had some of the most active Temperance Societies in the city.

In the summer, people from all parts of the city would take an open trolley for a cool ocean breeze or a dip at Carson Beach. They came "all the way from Brighton, without changing cars, for a nickel." In the days when most families had no automobile, the trolley lines were much more extensive than present MBTA routes. Transportation became more important, as more people worked in town and in other parts of Boston. Many second and third-generation South Boston-

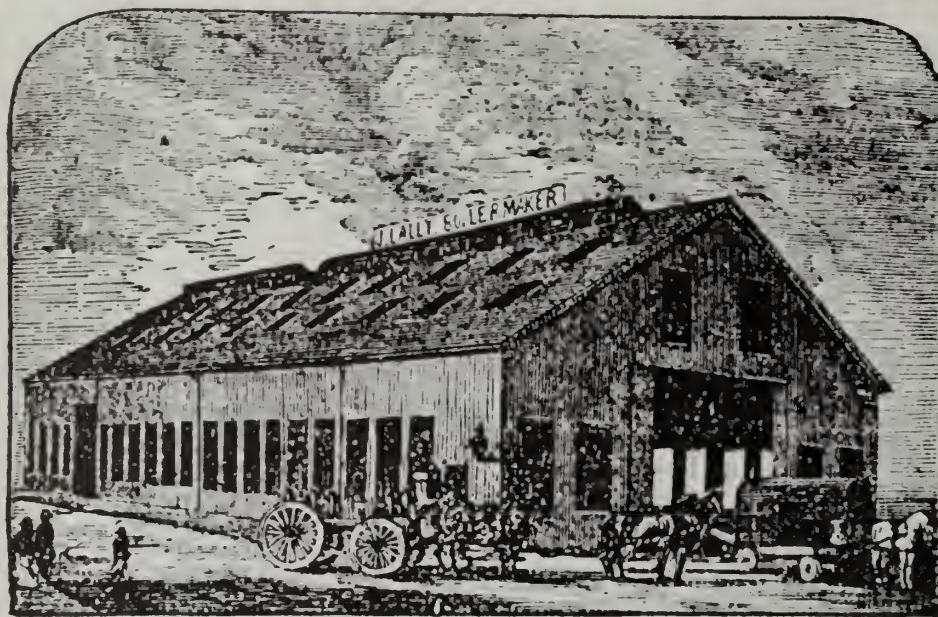
ians began getting jobs as policemen, firemen, teachers or civil servants.

And South Bostonians recall community celebrations, minstrel shows and talent contests, Saturday nights at the Strand, football club rivalries and the Fourth of July bonfires ("Everybody seemed to be getting ready for it for three months."). But what they remember most is an indefinable intimacy, a certain neighborliness, a comfortable predictability and a sense of belonging, a kind of good-humored concern that gives continuity to the community's identity.

But South Boston "is not all one big happy urban family collectively cooking soup all day for its sick relatives." In the last few decades, the district has felt the pain that has infected America's cities. Its population has dwindled as young people grew up and moved to the suburbs. Unemployment and economic insecurity prevented many families from keeping up their homes the way they would like and some fell into disrepair. The first housing project in the country had been built at Old Colony—a model development. But the two projects that followed displaced many families who were never able to come back to the district. The City seemed to ignore the peninsula when it came to funds for public works, parks and schools.

Plans were formulated to fill in a large portion of the harbor and destroy a huge chunk of City Point for an "Expo 75" bicentennial world's fair—a plan squelched by fervent community activism. And Dutch Elm disease killed many of the beautiful trees that characterized the district. South Bostonians began to feel the intimate neighborhood they loved being threatened. Their fear and apprehension has, in the last decade, focused on the issue of involuntary busing of public school students, ordered by the courts as a desegregation measure. The school crisis has concentrated all of the neighborhood's anxieties; South Boston's nerves have been exposed. While it is too early to know what the last few years will mean in historical perspective, South Boston people express a variety of

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reactions to the current crisis. "Forced busing is destroying our community," warns one resident, "unless it is stopped, South Boston will be a wasteland within five years." "I've gotten to know a lot more people than I ever knew before busing," comments another. "I think it's a lot stronger community than it ever was. People now in South Boston will stop each other on the street and talk with strangers about busing." A third citizen refers to the "so-called busing issue" because "I think it's wider than busing only. The climate of the district has changed."

Changes in their community disturb the people of South Boston and they are concerned about its future. But South Boston has never lost heart, and residents

are determined to maintain its character. They realize, as never before, the value of their neighborhood and that they must preserve the spirit they cannot replace.

The best way to discover the "state of mind" that is South Boston is to listen to South Boston people describe their lives and memories of the neighborhood they love.

DENNIS MANNING was born in the Old Head of Kinsale, County Cork, in 1883 and came to South Boston in 1903. At age 93, "Din" knows all about world events. He watches selected TV programs, loves to listen to debates and keeps up with the ballgames. Some years ago Manning sold his home and moved to an apartment in Dorchester because he "couldn't



Boston Beer Company, c. 1890

hammer a nail." In his younger days he worked in logging camps in California and can tell many tales about his traveling adventures. Here he talks about immigrant life in the D Street section of South Boston in the early 1900s:

"To come to America, you had to be sponsored or needed money with you. If you were booked into Boston and, of course, landed in Ellis Island (Castle Gardens), it didn't cost anything extra to come by the Fall River Line to Boston, once you passed through immigration. There was no formality overseas then; you just went down to the dock and bought your ticket for the ship. I had five pounds with me. The pound was worth five dollars in those days. I had one or two addresses here and my brother was supposed to meet me. We came into South Station—Broadway Bridge was up for repairs.

"There was nary a bit of trouble to become a citizen in those days. A politician would take four or five down and that was it. Some of them didn't know how to read or write, much less know the history of the United States.

"For fun, the greenhorns would get together at the home of different friends. Thursday night was their night off (usually Sunday also) and someone would bring a squeeze box (concertina) or a fiddle and we'd

all have a grand time, a kitchen racket or breakdown, as it was called. Lots of fun and laughs and occasionally they might have a cup of tea but rarely any food.

"Most of the greenhorns went to work on the boats, or on the railroads. Some went in groups into the wool houses. Some did sugar hauling and during the 1904 strike the teamsters wore their union buttons inside their caps so they wouldn't be seen. The street carmen started the union. They wrote their names all around in a circle so no one would know who'd started the union petition. Johnnie Lombard from South Boston worked in the fire department and made about \$12 to \$14 a week; the policemen were getting \$2 a day and the longshoremen averaged \$9 a week if you got put on.

"The living-out girls made about \$2 to \$2.50 a week, plus room and board. They never had a key to the front door, only the back door, the 'tradesmen's entrance.' They had to be in at 10 p.m. They weren't allowed to have friends in but occasionally you could sit on the back porch, or if the cook was friendly, she would make you a cup of tea in the kitchen. Sometimes the cook would switch meat on the family and cook the opposite. If the lady of the house complained, she would say, 'If you can't eat it, how do you expect us to



eat it?' Some living-out girls stayed their whole lives with one family and were well treated. Others left and went to work in the factories.

"Many of the immigrants who came to South Boston and Dorchester, usually two or three in the same family, cousins, brothers or sisters, slept in the same bed, all bunked in together. Five dollars a week, room and board. Course there were no bathrooms or toilets. Sometimes you had a toilet downstairs. We'd go out to Dover Street to take a bath on Saturday night—just take your own soap. Towels cost one cent.

"My wife used to work for Falvey's in South Boston before we married and she used to 'run cash'—take change from counter to counter, or she'd put a napkin and the money on a string and the cashier sitting in the 'crow's nest' would haul it up and send back the change.

"There were lots of breweries in those days before Prohibition; some were in Roxbury Crossing, Haffner's and others. They had big horses and long drays with barrels piled high. The horses looked something like the Clydesdale horses, some I think were called Percheron. There was a Double Diamond Brewery and a Boston Beer Company on Second Street in South Boston. The Boston Wharf owned most of this area and leased the buildings.

"Some of the other buildings around Melchor and A Street were Middleby's, Zuplex, who made jams and syrups, the American Can near the railroad yards, the button factory, and A.S. Lynch's Barrel Factory, a barrel cooper related to the Lynch's Taxi in South Boston now. They had a brass factory and you could see the forges pouring brass in the molds. During World War I they had prisoners of war down on A Street.

"Wool took a beating when synthetics came in and shoes were beaten by foreign imports, but in those days the Regal Shoes had a place on Summer Street and there was the Union Bootery. They're gone now. Thom McAn started with a little pokey place on A Street.

Ella Tew (Mrs. Patrick Walsh) as a young lady

"The Boston Molasses was located down near the point. Tom Kechane worked there and they made rum. Big ships used to come into the wharfs. Loads of coal for Metropolitan Coal Co., Domino Sugar and others. I worked in Kessler's on A Street. All Irish worked for them. You could smell leather all the time. The hides came from South America and you had to make the salt off them on the docks and bundle them, 100 hides to a box car and then they were sent to my own tannery in Pennsylvania or New York. There were no ticks in the South American hides. They used a sheep dip while the sheep were alive and that helped to kill them. The western U.S. sheep had tick marks right through the hides—they would spoil the leather. After I retired from Kessler's I used to walk in town to Boston almost every day. If the weather was good I'd walk along the strandway to Castle Island."

ATTRICK WALSH is a "Lower Ender," and proud of it. He lived as a boy in "the biggest tenement building in America," and made money digging clams with his father and uncle, fishing or doing odd jobs on the fish pier. He remembers women making fishnets for their husbands. "They had handnets with a hole on it; they also had big nets that let down. You'd see them picking out the windows. And they'd hang eelskins out the window to dry. They used to use them for sprained wrists and strained legs, like you'd use bandaging tape. Another thing they did was there was a certain kind of oil they could get from fish, and it was very good. I used it for colds and everything."

"Packy" spent an adventurous youth with the Merchant Marines. When he returned to South Boston he met and married Ella Tew, from Third Street, and after a persistent courtship; the couple recently celebrated their 50th anniversary. Mr. Walsh worked as a cooper, making barrels on the docks, a skilled trade that is no longer hand-done. He also worked in a wool building on Summer Street, at a time when most of the workers were immigrants, but the managers and owners from old Yankee families. "There was 14,000 men working on Summer Street, in little wool buildings," says Packy. "Today

I don't think there's 14 men working." Being an Irish Democrat could be difficult at times:

"Ninety six percent of all wool merchants over here were Republican, you know. I'll never forget the time I was working in a consignment house. They used to do 50 million dollars worth of business a year; that's a lot of business. In the west, now, in a place where they have a lot of sheep, they'd find a person that would truck all the wool into them. And then they'd bag it and ship it. These people used to take and sell it for them. And, of course, they used to do quite a business. But the outfit I used to work for owned a specific mill, the American Wholesale Wool Association and the Arlington mills and they processed the wool. They used to ship it up there and process it and practically have it all sold. I worked with Mr. Farnsworth. I used to take care of his office. I used to sweep out his office and everything in the morning.

"There were Irish too who worked in this same place. Some of them were very nice; others were bootleggers. It was during prohibition. And they'd stoop so low, they'd steal the tea and coffee bottles the fellas used to bring to work; they'd steal the stoppers out of them.

"Why I left this place. That's the time Hoover was coming to Boston, so they all had flagpoles. The office upstairs used to put out the flag. I used to put out the flag. I put it out for Hoover. Then Al Smith was coming and without getting any orders—he was a Democrat, you know, so I put the flag out. The super come and saw the flag out—they were all Republicans. So he said, 'who the hell put the flag out? I said, 'I did.' 'Get that flag down.' So I wouldn't take it in. 'If you want that flag in, you take it in.' 'No, you're supposed to take it in. If you don't take it in, you'll get fired.' I said, 'Before I get fired, I'll quit.' So I quit."

"There have been too few Polish people interested in politics," says young Jack Kowalski. "We've had one person in particular, JOE ALECKS, who's been in the business for 40 years. He's

passed bills through the legislature on a city and statewide basis. He's been sort of the father of Polonia." Joe Alecks talks about the Polish in South Boston and his own upbringing:

"My first job was to lug bottles of milk for H. P. Hood & Company when they were across the street from Vinton Place and faced Old Colony Avenue, where the housing project is. We used horses and teams. I got 50 cents a night. And then I went to work on a farm in Concord during the summer. I lived there. There were 100 acres right on the Bedford-Concord line and the house was built in 1720. We used to find Indian arrowheads, tomahawks, spearheads. There were springs there and the Indians used to have a camp there. I was getting a dollar a day and keep. We worked from dawn to dusk, seven days a week. I was always late coming back to school because I went to work to pick apples in Boxboro. So I led a healthy life.

"As kids we used to hang around the corner of Dorchester Avenue and Dexter Street over by the tunnel. At that time, you had a big field where the junk yard is today. When we saw Kelly, the cop, come down, we ran. He'd make sure he put his one foot down after the other to make a noise. There were no ifs, ands or buts, because he gave you a backhand so we behaved. There were a lot of Poles in that area at the time. And there were some fights with kids. Come out of school and they call you a lousy Pollack and throw stones at you. But it wasn't that bad and we played with everybody in the neighborhood. There were Italians, Irish and English. One of my best friends was Don Musico who runs a cafe there on Dorchester Avenue. There were the Donovans and the Gormans and a few other Irish families went to St. Mary's parochial school and they spoke better Polish than the Poles themselves. Of course there was sports. When we were kids, we played hockey down in Columbus Park when they flooded it. Football, baseball, like any kid would.

"When we didn't have automobiles, we used to go

to picnics. We had picnic grounds in West Roxbury, Dedham, Weymouth, and in Bedford. Before the War we didn't have TV and not all of us had automobiles so we got buses to pick us up in front of church and take us to these places. We'd dance, eat and drink. But the days of meetings, of clubs and joining organizations is over.

"A Polish American club was founded about 1900. And then it was not what we call an organized club—it was more a place you could gather. Most of the members were from St. Mary's parish. They needed a place to socialize. We had other clubs, too. The Polish Young Men's Club, for instance. That was across from Billy's Market. The real organization of the club came in the late '20s on Dorchester Avenue, across from the junk yard. There's a union headquarters there now. The only heating there was this big pot-bellied coal stove. So we decided to build a better place. I was an officer for six or seven years, director, vice-president, president. I still go there for meetings. Now it seems to be the center for Polish unity. Before the clubs, the leadership was the church. But now the church has lost its leadership.

"When the Pole came here, he came from a country that always seemed to be devastated by wars. Economically they were very low because they were kept down. They were serfs. A Pole—the word itself means land or field. If they owned a little piece of land, they were happy. So they would come here and buy a house. It may not be the best and they spent the time to fix it and keep it in good repair. And they took pride in it. Years ago it was a shame to be on welfare. People used to help each other. They worked hard. They may have had two jobs. They would have entertainment down at the club or go to a picnic—wouldn't cost much.

"When the Pole came over, there was, of course, the language barrier and prejudice from others who had been here before. They began to feel insecure because the Pole worked like a horse and it created ani-



Broadway, c. 1915

mosity and hatred. They were afraid the Poles would take over. Even in the churches.

“Our people were God-fearing people. Poland is a country that really follows religion. Even though it’s behind the Iron Curtain 95 per cent of the people are Roman Catholic. Now, to get married over there, they don’t consider the church a legal marriage. So what

people do is they get married in city hall and then they go to church and get married. I was in Poland last year and I have a cousin over there. My cousin’s daughter got married on Christmas Day and it was like a belt-line. They were getting married every half-hour. On Christmas Day. Now, only this Sunday, there was a marriage of a couple who got married in



Castle Island Bridge

Poland and they came over here and got married in church. In our church last Sunday.

"There seems to be a renaissance of Polish learning. Young adults are more ethnically conscious. In the past, a lot of Poles denied their birthrights. But they are becoming aware of the great contributions the Poles made to the world's history. A lot of the contributions that Poles made to this country as well as to the world are not in our curricula in our schools. At one

time, Poland was the third largest nation in Europe. The boundaries went from the gates of Berlin to the gates of Moscow. And then during the partitions, they chopped it up. Now we are trying to take our rightful place in the academic world by writing the history of our contributions and getting it to the public."

"In the summer, I live at the beach," attest many South Boston mothers. The district's beaches are one of its most attractive

advantages, and residents made the most of the sun and sand. The beaches were even more important before most families had automobiles. JOSEPHINE GERALD talks nostalgically of her amusements as a young mother:

"I used to take my daughter down to the beach at the foot of K Street. It seems that each street had its own private beach. People that lived nearby met down there all summer long with the children, and the kids had a lot of fun. At K Street there was a yacht club they called the Mosquito Fleet and it was on four posters and a ramp. We used to put our blankets underneath to get out of the sun. Several times during the summer we'd ask our friends who didn't live in South Boston to come over and we'd make a picnic basket and walk down. Nobody had cars at that time. Everything was walking and streetcars. We'd go to Castle Island and spend most of the day. We had the bath houses, the boys' and the girls' and they were a couple of old wooden buildings. Mayor Curley, when he became mayor, fixed the whole beach. He tore those old buildings down and built new ones and he built a bathhouse for women where they have the school. And he really made something beautiful out of that beach. We had friends that came from out of state or from California and people that had travelled all over said that we had the most beautiful beach. Another good thing about the beach was that it didn't cost any money. And people didn't have any money.

"In fact they wanted to put amusements down there at the beach. For years they tried but everybody said no. We liked it the way it was. On Sundays we had a band concert and everybody would have an early dinner and rush over to try to find a spot because people came from everywhere. We sat on a few benches and the ground and listened for a couple of hours—it was grand.

"I remember when my daughter was born. I was a young girl, a very young girl. There was a moving picture house right on Broadway between I and Emerson Street. And I lived near M Street. Every week the man

would come by and put coupons in our mailboxes to go to the movie for one nickel and that coupon. And everybody, we'd all get together, we'd put the baby in the carriage, go over, park the carriages outside and see a whole afternoon of movies for a nickel and you'd hear babies crying. It was several years later they built the theatre on Broadway near the five and ten. That was the first one that was built. We used to rush Saturday night, and you'd think we were in a big parade. Everybody would be going to the movie. We had a wonderful time and we'd come out and everybody would talk to each other.

"And another amusement we had in the summer, most every wife would have supper ready for her husband early, at least I did, and you'd pile up the dishes in the sink and go down the beach. And that was long before we had the nice beach. We'd walk back and forth, way down to the Head House, where I would swim. And you'd meet the same people every night all summer long and you'd walk down almost near Castle Island and back again. We'd stop and sit on the bench. That was our fun. We enjoyed it. At that time everybody enjoyed things."

A talented musician, NORMAN KAUPP's smile lights up a room. IRVING KOWALKER, an artist, is a gentle, peace-loving man with a memory for details. ERIC WARTMAUGH tells us that his mother, a local midwife in the days before babies were born in hospitals, delivered Cardinal Cushing. The three close friends are active members of the Church of St. Matthew and the Redeemer on Fourth Street:

MR. KAUPP: "I've been in this district all my life—since 1897. Grandma Kaupp came over from Germany. My father was born here. My mother was born in Frankfurt, Germany and she came to South Boston when she was eight years old. My mother came over here with an aunt.

MR. KOWALKER: "My parents were born outside of Berlin, Germany and they came around 1900. They didn't like the military regime, the kaiser and all



Street Scene in industrial section. c. 1890

that. My grandfather's mother was a Hines of 'Hines Pickles.' My grandfather was one of the first homeowners on Columbia Road. The houses there were developed about 75 years ago. Johnson was the big builder of all those houses."

MR. WARTMAUGH: "My father was in charge of Manchester City Yard—in Manchester, England. He was in a very good position. But we had relatives here. He had a sister that lived near Dorchester Heights. Their name was Goodwyn—used to shoe horses, Reuben Goodwyn. We came over and stayed with them until my father found work and eventually we moved

down to Oslo Terrace off 5th Street. And my father worked for Walworth's like everybody else did.

"They used to call that the madhouse. They had iron gates. The whistle blew at 7 o'clock and you're crossing the street and those gates closed, so you went into the hall and you stood there and the man telephoned upstairs. I called him my Uncle George. He was about six foot two and he would call up. 'Eric Wartmaugh is down in the hall here.' If the boss liked you he'd say, 'Well, send him up.' If he didn't, he'd say, 'Tell him to come back at noontime.' So you could lose a half day's pay. I've seen men go in Monday and

*Mr. Kowalker's
father and uncle
with three friends
in 5-man bicycle race
at M Street Park*



they didn't have many orders from the main office so they said, 'Well, come in Wednesday.' You could lose two or three days a week."

MR. KOWALKER: "My grandfather took an awful riding because he was German. He worked at Walworth's and he was called the old German and everything else and he used to come home in tears sometimes. They'd ride him something terrible. And he was so dead set against war. My grandfather and my father were the same way. They hated war. Yet they used to ride them to pieces. We had a family that lived in back of us when I was kids and they used to throw stones at us because I was German. This was right on Columbia Road when I used to go to school. Not a lot of them but there were isolated kids. First World War. And my father came because he didn't like the kaiser regime. I was so dead set against the military myself I didn't even want to put a uniform on when I went to high school. I didn't like uniforms. And here I am one of the biggest heroes in South Boston as far as that goes. Second World War—I got medals going down to the floor. Not of my own free will, but we were stuck with Japan. What are you going to do? I joined right after Pearl

Harbor. I got out of the war in '45. I was so glad to get out of the war.

"I went right back to my post card business, which I was sorry I did because I should have gone in to the government like all my friends did."

MR. KAUPP: "Usually in the papers you see South Boston described as an Irish working class community of closely knit families. The Irish were not culturally, socially dominant in South Boston when we were younger. Things have changed. A lot of Germans and wealthy protestants all got their lace curtains and moved out of town. There were some very wealthy people in South Boston, all Yankee families."

MR. WARTMAUGH: "That's right. There was Dr. Fletcher up here and the Duffy's had that estate and where O'Donnell's is was another estate. There were lawyers and doctors here. And the Dean estate. Then they started to move out and other ethnic groups moved in. Like the Italians were down at Emmett Street; down around Andrew Square is the Polish area. There were clubs. There was the German Club."

MR. KAUPP: "The German Club, the night before a holiday, they'd invite the children and of course,

they had German food like sauerkraut, pig's knuckles, potato salad, rye bread and steins of beer. And the kids were given beer to drink. There was never any trouble. We'd be there until about two in the morning, singing and dancing and having a regular good time.

"There were six Protestant churches and there was lots of social activity between them. We used to go to the churches for their social times, suppers and things like that. You could take any of these churches in South Boston and at least twice a week there was always something taking place, like suppers and minstrel shows and plays."

MR. KOWALKER: "Norm was the original minstrel man there. He plays the piano."

MR. KAUPP: "Yeah, and in those days they'd have shows for three days. The same way with the Gate of Heaven Church. And St. Augustine's. They all had minstrel shows. In fact, I'll say this about South Boston. It was noted for having the most talent of any section around."

MR. WARTMAUGH: "I remember when the Redeemer burnt down. March 4, 1959. My son was in the choir that day. But he got out. All the kids got out. We never really knew how it started. But in a way it was the best thing that ever happened. It brought the whole congregation closer together. It was a rejuvenation. The congregation built up after that. For a while. And we merged with Grace Church. And it made it stronger. Instead of having two weak churches it made one strong one. And the other congregations in South Boston all contributed money."

MR. KAUPP: "The church's activities have changed since the early '60s. You don't have as large a congregation. We've lost a lot to the suburbs. And new ones haven't come in to take their place."

MR. WARTMAUGH: "The church was more important when we were young. You had to go to church in those days. And you'd walk along the boulevard. Hundreds of people used to walk on the boulevard on Sundays. There was the church school prior to the

morning service and at night there was always evening song. That was well attended because in those days you didn't have television and all the other distractions. That's why the lodges were so strong too—the Masonic Lodge, Oddfellows."

MR. KOWALKER: "And families were more together years ago. There was more of a friendly spirit. You'd help each other, you know. Sunday noontime, the meals used to be the thing. Everyone was there. And you'd dress up. And you all sat down to a roast. It's altogether different now."

MR. KAUPP: "When we were young South Boston was more of a beach resort. I remember Marine Park, the amusements, the stands all along 6th Street. And we had the aquarium. The open cars used to come along Farragut Road and they'd go out as far as Norumbega for 5 cents. Then there was a lot more activity over at Castle Island. During the summertime there were a lot of programs for children. When I was a child, they had Punch and Judy shows and they used to give us ice cream. Of course, the cannons were all out there. There was a bridge going out there at that time. It was a boardwalk all the way out. There was a drawbridge too for boats. They used to go from there over to the South Boston Yacht Club. And then we had the Head House for seafood dinners. We had concerts from the balcony. Every Sunday they had a band concert. And at Linkletter's Field they had a tent pitched every summer at 8th Street. They used to have evangelist services there. All the different churches would attend. Linkletters—no relation to Art Linkletter—owned all that property. And they used to have bonfires the night before the Fourth down there. We'd collect all the barrels and rubbish and bring it down there. And Andrew Square used to be a popular place for the circus."

"South Boston has changed physically. At the foot of M Street was Lawley's Shipyard years ago. And then the House of Correction was there. And there was another place they called the 'crazy house.' And then,



Reverend Cardinal Cushing at annual Thanksgiving Day banquet at Blinstrub's Village

of course, where the army base is today on Summer Street, that was all fields of cattails. We kids used to go there in the summertime. I saw Commonwealth Pier being built because I was working for the King's Terminal in 1918. And then there were those pilings—where Bony Ward's used to be—where they used to take the dead horses. L Street Bridge opened up and

you'd see the horses. And we talk about air pollution today! This is mild compared to the odor that came from the island with the dead horses. They'd slaughter the horses over there and make gelatin from the horses' hoofs.

MR. WARTMAUGH: "There was a home for orphan children. It was run by the Church Home Soci-



ety who sponsored children who were orphaned or partially orphaned. My mother died while we were at Oslo Terrace and we stayed in the Church Home for a number of years. Then my father remarried and we

came out again. Later Cardinal O'Connell bought it and it was used for a parochial school. Then it was torn down and St. Brigid's Convent was built."

MR. KAUPP: "It's changed in other ways too. I

was born and brought up here. My sister married. They got out of South Boston. They live in Milton. My brother moved out to Hingham. And that left my mother and my aunt all alone. I just didn't want to leave so I stayed and held the old house. Finally my aunt died. Then my mother died about eight years ago. And that left just me. And most of my friends, they're all out in the suburbs.

MR. KOWALKER: "South Boston never really enjoyed too good a reputation. When you say you're from South Boston many people look down their nose at you. It's a shame to say but there have been people in South Boston who didn't have anything to start with. They came from poor families and as time went on, they advanced and moved out. Those kind of people today, some of them don't like you to mention South Boston."

Many immigrants to South Boston came to escape political persecution. ROSE SARGAVAKIAN was a young girl in Armenia when Turks kidnapped her in 1915 when Turkish forces slaughtered two million Armenians. She has lived at City Point 46 years. Mrs. Sargavakian worked embroidering fancy bead work on wedding gowns. She and her sister, ARMEN SARKESIAN, now teach sewing and knitting at the L Street Senior Recreation Center, and play in the Nellie Gorham's Senior band. The sisters find it difficult to control their emotions as they describe the miracle that brought them to America. Mrs. Sargavakian talks about her life after her capture:

"I am from Shablenkaraysar. I was ten years old during the Turkish massacre in 1915. They separated me from my mother and took me to an orphanage. Then I started learning Turkish. A few months later, they said they haven't got enough food; they can't keep me in the orphanage: so they have to give me some work. They sent me to a Turkish home. They gave him a little money—like a quarter. They left me there. I had to take care of a little boy. They had three girls, a grandmother and a mother and I had to do their work all the time.

"I was so miserable. Every night, I used to cry. I lost my sister, mother. I don't know where they were. And after that, a miracle happened. I was crying to go to the hospital. I was crying and saying, 'Dear God, let me get sick and go to the hospital to be away from them.' The next morning, I got up. I had boils all along my legs. They had to send me to the hospital. After I got better, they sent me to another place. Those people were very good. They took care of me.

"Afterwards, I found my mother, my sister. She helped me get away from them because she went to a fortune teller. The fortune teller told her that they were going to send me away from the city, so they wouldn't find me anymore."

Her sister, Mrs. Sarkesian, tells how a fortune-teller helped re-unite the family:

"We went to a fortune teller. We said we didn't believe, but everybody said they told the truth. She put the money, just like a nickel, in plain water. 'Look,' she says, 'I don't want to look at your fortune because you don't believe it. You are not the girl you say you are. You are not a Turk.' She says, 'If you want to believe it, I look, otherwise I don't look at it.' She looked and looked and said, 'You have a brother, bigger than you. He is not in this country, not in Turkey. He has some kind of different hat—an American hat.' She said just now he was going to the post office to find out about his family. Then she says, 'You have a sister over here, but if you don't get her right away, you'll never see her again because they are planning to send her someplace else. And you have another brother, blond and blue-eyed, in Turkey. He is living but you will never, never find him.'"

Helped by the hints of the fortune-teller, Mrs. Sarkesian managed to find her sister and her mother, and made contact with the brother in America, who got the whole family on a boat to New York. Mrs. Sargavakian continues her story:

"What a relief it was to come to America. We came in 1920. I can't explain how happy we were to land in America. I lived in New York for nine years doing em-

broidery. Then in 1929, I got married in Boston. I came here with my mother to visit friends on L Street. They were living here. He came to see me. They fixed it up, I suppose, but I said, 'Impossible—I won't come to Boston, I live in New York.' But the lady said, 'Don't say impossible, you will like it here—you'll come.' And it happened. He came to New York and convinced me to come.

"He put me in his car, he took me down the Point, and he said, 'You know, we bought a house here, this whole thing belongs to us. Don't you see how nice it is—beautiful?' I wasn't married yet, we were just talking, and I said 'What of it, in New York for 5 cents, we go all over.' But it made a good impression on me. Really, City Point is beautiful. I came here and I loved it. I had many Irish neighbors. Nowadays, they've gone away, but we had a lot of Irish friends here. I loved them all. There were a few Armenians who used to live in the alley in back, but most of the neighbors were Irish. Most of the Armenians in South Boston came from around the same place.

"We go to an Armenian church in Cambridge. My children speak very good Armenian. I think it's important. You know, my son used to go to Latin School. One time I went over there and I said, I wonder if my son's Armenian hurts his English. I asked the teacher. He looked at me. 'You mean to tell me Michael speaks Armenian and writes and reads it?' I said yes. 'Oh,' he said, 'I'm going to give him more points in English. That's a good way, your nationality. He should speak Armenian—that's wonderful,' he said. People should know where they are from. Who's Armenian? Armenians are an old, old Christian nation. We had a kingdom. Very good kings. In February, we have 'Vartanantz Day.' Sourp Vartan fought against 60,000 Persians—fought for Christianity. Of course, they lost, but Christianity stayed. So we celebrate Sourp Vartan Day every year.

"There is a movement for Armenian freedom here. They are doing things now. Our properties are taken

away. Turkish people got it. After killing two million Armenians who didn't do anything. So we want it back. They gather in groups to do something about it.

"We are proud of our heritage, but we like America too. I like South Boston, maybe because I've lived here 46 years. I belong to the senior citizens at L Street. We play in the band. We go to nursing homes and hospitals. You sing, you play something. They're very happy.

"I think people in South Boston are friendlier with each other. You get out in the street. You say hello, good morning. Other places I don't think are like that. My daughters say the house is too old, sell it, and go some other place. I don't want to go. My friends are here and I'm used to it. I like it here and I like living here."

A tall, dark, husky-voiced man in his early forties, ARTHUR GULINELLO is unabashedly sentimental about his love for South Boston. Arthur, who manages a small appliance shop on South Street, devotes a great deal of energy to community groups. Friends know he's always ready to help when they need him. Arthur laughs easily as he recalls his boyhood, and compares his sons' experiences of their neighborhood with his own:

"There'd have to be something real big for me to move out of Southie. I like it here; close to the water, close to the church. And my roots are here; my friends are here.

"I was born on N Street and lived there for eight or nine months. My mother was one step ahead of the rent collector and we moved on to 6th Street. When I bought this house, in 1963, I was very happy. I was looking all over the place and found out that this lady wanted to get rid of her house. I was very fortunate and I've done a lot of work on it. I like it here.

"My parents came from Sicily. My father came over in 1912. He just wanted to leave and come here. My mother's father came over here and worked for a gas company and he brought a brother with him. My mother lost her father, her brother and her mother in



Friends socializing at L Street Recreation Center

the space of six months in the Influenza of 1918. Her father and brother were here in the country and they had already sent fare to my mother and her mother to come over with two brothers. In the meantime her mother died over there. But she still came. She heard that her father died while coming over here. So when she came here there was nobody actually here. There

was just her, her sister and two brothers. She had left another brother back in Italy.

"In my early childhood—I mean five or six years old—we were on welfare. Those were poor days. My father worked as a laborer for a guy by the name of Frank Cundari down here on 3rd Street. I can remember my mother going down to the corner of L and 2nd



House of Correction and Industry, 19th century

Street for milk, four quarts for a dime, grapefruits. My mother going down to St. Vincent de Paul asking for money for shoes. Those are not happy memories. We were getting \$13 a week and we were paying \$23 a month for rent. So figure it out. But I tell you, she gave us a good education. We never starved. She might have, but we never did. And the church helped us out quite a bit, gave us Thanksgiving baskets, Christmas checks.

“We were so poor we couldn’t even afford a radio. But my mother went down to McShanes—I think it was \$16 for an Emerson radio and that, to me, was pure happiness. We used to come in from outside around five o’clock and start with the soap operas, the serials, Jack Armstrong. Not a Sunday would go by without the seven of us sitting around the table listening to them, although my father would have connipions because I was playing football on a Sunday

morning and I would show up late for Sunday dinner. He didn't care for that. But as much as he screamed the dinner, which was spaghetti as a rule, was still always in the stove and always warm.

"I sold bait when I was a kid down at the fish pier. The Head House. We used to catch it, my brothers and I. Shiners and silverheads used to be out in droves. Then we would get over to Atlantic Avenue where all the fish markets are now and we'd sell them. We made more money selling sometimes than the people who were fishing. One Labor Day we made \$16 and that was more than my brother, who was working a regular job, made in a week. And it was a happy childhood. You were outside and you met a lot of people and you'd find a nickel and buy a bag of popcorn.

"We went swimming down at the foot of N Street. It was a good place. In those days, there were quite a few gangs. We were called the Tigers when I was a kid, then the Indians and then I started chumming around down at O and 2nd Streets and played football for the Redskins. I played a lot of softball too—for the Hawks, the Hobos. I played for about three or four teams here over a span of about 10 years in softball. We used to hang out at Al's Spa, like the kids are doing now on another corner.

"This neighborhood was mostly all Irish. I went to St. Brigid's Grammar School. Graduated in '45. Then I went to Thomas N. Hart and on to Southie High. Graduated from Southie in '49. There was more of a mixture there but it was still mostly Irish. I would say almost 100 per cent of the kids in the neighborhood were going to parochial school, for the first grades anyway. We went to St. Brigid's or Nazareth as it was called then.

"It was much different then. I think there's more leniency today. I mean I had some good strict teachers up there and it gave you a basis for adulthood. They taught you. And they took an interest in you. I don't know today. They got more freedom. But these nuns were dedicated. When they went home at night, they

corrected papers. They really took pains in trying to teach you. They knocked it into you. They made it so hard for me in grammar school that they made it easy for me in high school.

"And our parents were harder. As a matter of fact, my father was so strict that the night before my sister got married he said, 'be home early.' Her husband was from Maine and they went for a walk down around the beach. It was summertime. She went up to him and said, 'Dad, you mind if I go for a walk,' he said, 'Yeah, be home early.' This was the night before they got married.

"As Italians we took a lot of ribbing. The word, guinea, was used quite a bit. As a matter of fact, one time I was in a Irish play in seventh grade and one of the girls quit because I was Italian. This was in parochial school. She quit. She wouldn't dance with an Italian, believe it or not. But another girl took her place and I stayed in.

"But I eventually married an Irish girl, a local girl. There seem to be a lot of Italian-Irish marriages. I think it makes a heck of a marriage because you're getting two nationalities that are almost complete opposites and you're bringing them together. Of course, the Italian are strong and stubborn and the Irish have a tendency to be strong and stubborn so you got two stubborn people. But if you love each other, you're always working for one thing, the best for your family. And I found that. I couldn't have picked a better girl if the Good Lord had brought her down from the heavens above. As a matter of fact, I always tell her, God must have put you on earth just especially for me. I can't be any happier. It has been a happy and a blessed marriage.

"In our family there were four boys and one girl. I was the youngest. We all had certain responsibilities. I was only seven or eight when the war broke out and my brother went into the service and my older brother was in a plant working for the government. We had odd jobs. I used to get a quarter a week from my father



for an allowance. I washed the floors, emptied the buckets, things that kids won't lower themselves to do today. And we made our own recreation. Most of the time we played at M Street Park. Played a lot of tag, stickball in the streets. Police were one step behind us most of the time. It was a normal childhood as far as playing. Because when you play I think you throw nationalities and religions right out of the way. You play ball. You play to win. It was a poor childhood but a happy one.

"We had our parties with the girls, but I'll tell you, sports were more important. I got a job when I was a freshman up at the Hart School. I was a sweeper over at Fenway Park. The only reason I got the job was so that I could watch the ballgames. I saw 77 ballgames in 1946 and I saw the three World Series finals. That's the only reason I got the job. And I was making money. I even saw the all-star game that year. I met quite a few of the ballplayers. And it's rubbed off on my kids. They love sports. I figure, like Bump Hadley used to say—'you keep them in sports, you keep them out of courts.' And I believe in that.

"Things are different now. Everything is handed to the kids. You know the old saying, 'I want to give my kids everything,' I think that's wrong. I even do it. My kids are spoiled rotten. But I don't know. My father was making \$13 a week and I'd say there was more love in that house then you'd find anywhere. We made our own games and really enjoyed ourselves. My mother wouldn't see me from eight in the morning until five, just for meals, then out again. But we never got into trouble. Never had the police. Not once has any one of my family been in court.

"Religion is important to me. I went to parochial school for eight years and I've been involved in church activities in our parish. I was president of the Home and School Association. My two children graduated from Nazareth too. My own family comes first. You need the church, because without the church and the

good Lord's blessing you're not going to have a good family.

"Being an adult with a family now, and looking at the people I grew up with, none of them are in the district now. They thought they were bettering themselves leaving, but I don't think they were. Some of them wanted to buy their own houses and couldn't buy in Southie. It's very hard to buy a home here, especially the Point. So they went out. They say there's a little town out in Braintree that has all kids from Southie in it. But I talked to quite a few of them and quite a few of them would love to come back, but not with the busing situation.

"I don't think anything will bring them back now, because their roots are set in another neighborhood and their children are growing up. It would be like somebody asking me to move now. I wouldn't move. And, of course, if you met a girl that was not from Southie it wouldn't make any difference to her whether she stayed in Southie or not, but what more could you ask for, the beach, the park, the Island, the church, the school, the transportation. You can't beat it."

Irish by birth and Lithuanian by marriage, GERARD CAREY feels his family lives in the best of two cultural worlds. His father, an Irishman, worked as a chauffeur in New Jersey and migrated to South Boston where he met Mrs. Carey. "I was born when my parents were vacationing in New Jersey and came back to Boston three weeks later," Gerry says, "So I can't say I was born in South Boston, but I certainly was brought up in South Boston."

"The neighborhood that I grew up in was a good example of how the Irish immigrated to America. It was almost like a transplant of a village in Ireland. I had cousins that lived across the street and around the corner. So it gave me a strong sense of neighborhood and community reinforced by uncles, aunts and cousins. My family came from a section of Galway called



Czech dancers at Marine Park pageant, c. 1918

Connemara, which is an Irish-speaking section. But the language was used primarily so that children wouldn't understand what the parents were talking about. I only know a few guys my age who can speak it.

"We had Lithuanian kids in my neighborhood as well as Irish kids. And it was very easy for us to intermarry because our cultures, at least in America, are very much the same because we were children of immigrants. So that we all had the European work ethic reinforced by going to church every Sunday and by religious education.

"I grew up on East 4th Street between Dorchester

and G Street. Two doors down from where I lived was a Jewish synagogue. South Boston is a polyglot community; we have people of every nationality and religious persuasion. When I was a child it was an active Jewish synagogue and every Saturday morning we would have Jewish men coming to worship. So I grew up realizing that there was diversity in South Boston from a very early age.

"I went to grammar school at St. Augustine's. I was an altar boy there. It was a very comfortable parish to go to because the predominant ethnic group was Irish and, of course, the religious teachers, the clergy was Irish and the nuns seemed to be Irish-American.

It was a very traditionally oriented school. And it was a lot of discipline. If you didn't do your homework you were made to realize that you were deficient. There were girls, but we had separated classes. It wasn't co-educational.

"When I was a kid the majority of people that I knew were all children of immigrants. Their parents were from one 'old country' or another. And they were either in the factories or the utilities, the railroads or the MTA. I think children growing up today, their fathers, some of them, are holding white collar jobs. All my friends' fathers never had a high school education. It was entirely different.

"My children have broader horizons than I do. But they're a lot more chauvinistic than I was at their age. I didn't feel as much a part of South Boston growing up as they seem to.

"I think South Boston is a different community from when I grew up. The South Boston that I grew up in was, to a large extent, immigrants or children of immigrants. That has changed; just because of upward mobility, higher level of aspiration and desire to move somewhere else, people have moved out and those apartments that are vacant have been filled by people from all over the city and country. For me, South Boston offers a neighborhood that I'm familiar with, comfortable in. And it enables me to be able to afford to give my children things that I couldn't afford if I moved to Lewis Wharf or something like that."

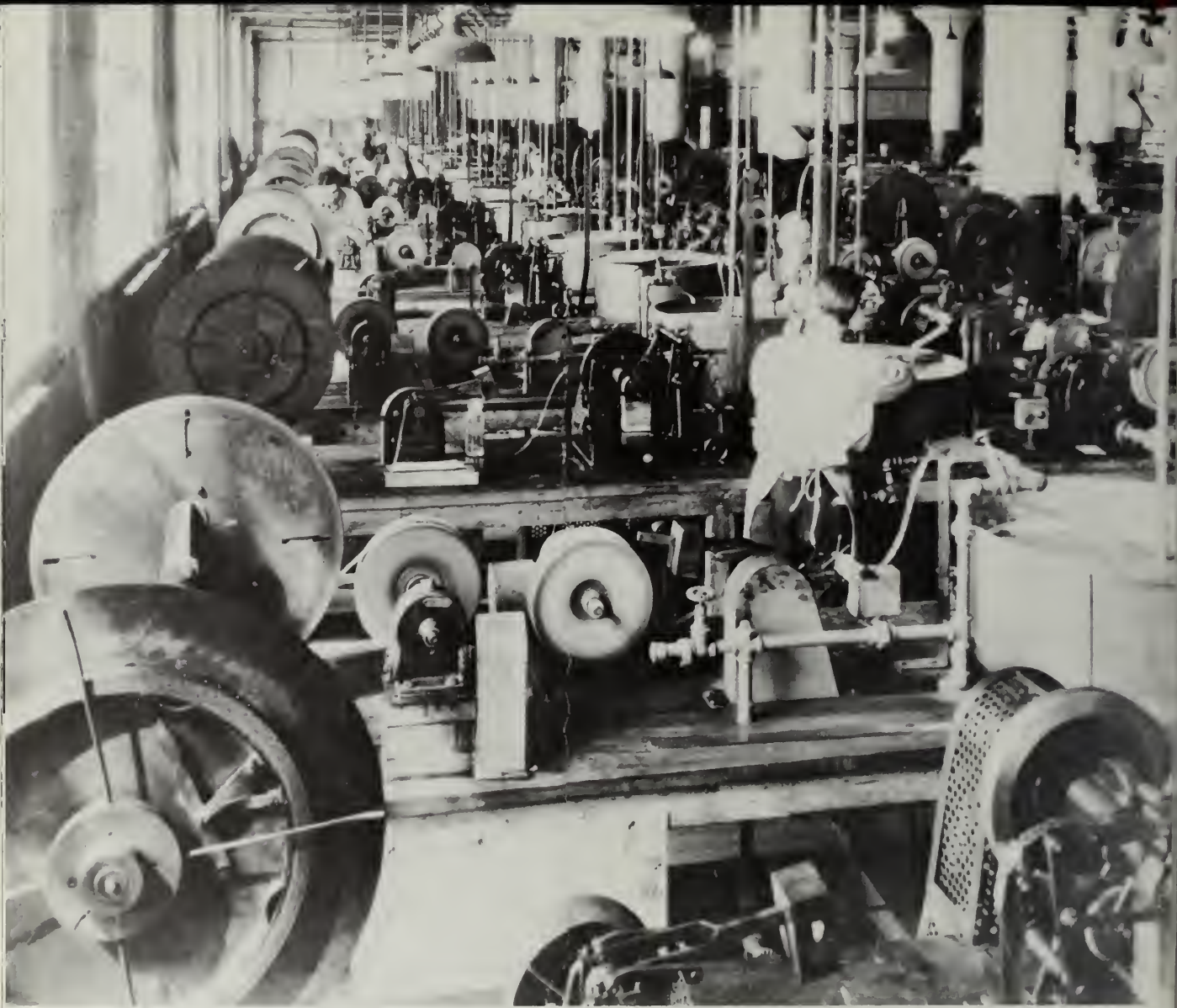
Gerry's wife, EVELYN CAREY, represents the third generation of her family to live in South Boston. A nurse at the Carney Hospital, she feels it important to pass on language and national customs to her children.

"My mother and father were both born in South Boston but my mother at about the age of five went to Lithuania and lived there until she was 15. Her parents had come over as immigrants just a few years before she was born, then decided they liked the old country

better and went back, which is really kind of reverse immigration.

"My father was born here of immigrant parents. He's the oldest in the family. He met my mother at a Lithuanian dance in South Boston, a Knights of Columbus Dance, and they were married. She was 18 and he was 19. When my mother came back to South Boston, she was living with a girlfriend. There were a lot of people at that time who took in boarders. Lithuanians took in Lithuanians from the old country and that's how she managed until she got married. She tells a story about going to the Tuckerman School, which is a grammar school still in use. When she came back at the age of 15, she had lost her English completely. She had been reading and writing before she went to the old country. And they put her back in with first graders. She didn't last very long, but she can remember how embarrassing it was. Then she went to night school. I have one sister and both of us were born at home. My mother didn't believe in hospitals so I guess I'm a real native South Bostonite. I was born in the Andrew Square district.

"There wasn't too much outside of Lithuanian people growing up that I knew. All my friends were Lithuanian, except for the children in the neighborhood, but I also went to St. Peter's which was a Lithuanian grammar school. In fact I was the first class that graduated from the school that went through the complete eight grades. There were a lot of people in the neighborhood who weren't Lithuanians. I had what you call two sets of friends, your afterschool friends and during school. But I must say I was much closer with the children I went to school with. If you weren't a first or third cousin, you were related somewhat. Or your families knew each other so it was mainly the same group of friends even after school. We'd participate a lot with the girls because there were all these church activities, sodality, and school itself. You didn't have to go outside of the church.



Workers at the Gillette factory, mid 1940's

"Going to high school you felt in a minority. People would always ask you what nationality you were, and I'd say Lithuanian; they'd say, what's that? So you had to explain what it was. A lot of people thought you were Lutheran.

"Neighborhoods change. There's been a lot of changes around St. Peter's, the Lithuanian church. The Project area has deteriorated in the past few years. Where we're living now, it's a nice atmosphere. It's mainly two family homes; there's one three-decker on the street; it's a small one-way street. Everyone is very friendly. Everyone is very aware of each other but no one minds anyone else's business unless you want them to. In the summertime we become very, very close. Everyone's out. There's a lot of sitting on the doorstep. Some people you don't see all winter. Everyone is very private to a certain extent but if you need help there's five people there.

"Right now I don't want to leave South Boston. I like it. I always had pride coming from Southie."

Editor of the weekly newspaper of the Free Albania Organization, Liria, DHMITRI NIKOLLA is an important figure in the Albanian community whose "capital" he says, is South Boston. A sturdy man with a strong bass voice, Nikolla and his family moved to South Boston 20 years ago to be near their church:

"We call Boston the capital of Albanians in America for many reasons. Here was the first church, the first organizations. And here has been the culture of Albanians in America. We had great men like Bishop F. S. Noli who was not only the bishop, he was a writer, a speaker and the prime minister of Albania in 1924. The newspaper, *Albania-America*, was started in Boston. That's why there is a majority here.

"There are over 10,000 Albanians in this area. Boston itself and around Boston—in Braintree, Quincy, Dorchester, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Somerville—all over. In South Boston there must be about 100 families. The Albanian Cathedral is in South Boston. Peo-

ple come from other places. South Boston is like a center. But it is very difficult for those living outside, in the suburbs. People don't have much time now. Everybody is busy for one reason or another. But they come to the church on Sundays and they have church services and Sunday school. Albanian school is every Saturday morning. They get together often. Our organization has some affairs. We have a big picnic the third week of September and we get about two or three thousand people. Then every November we celebrate Albanian Independence Day. Most of the time we have affairs at Anthony's Pier 4—Anthony is an Albanian. Sometimes we present films on Albania and as many as 600 or 700 people come.

"I was born in Albania. I came in 1938. I was about 19 years old. My mother and my brother came six months before me. Then in Albania my father died, so I came here and lived with my mother and my brother in the West End.

"In the old country, we used to think if you came to America, you just bend down and get the dollars and put them in your pocket. So that's what I thought. When I came to the Grand Central Station in New York City, I saw more people than I'd ever seen in my life. I was trying to get a train to come to Boston. I was looking to see the dollars. I didn't see any dollars there, only people. I came to Boston, to South Station where my people greeted me and brought me to Barton Street in the West End. I didn't like it, I'll tell you the truth. I was crying for a month. Because I left all my friends and my beautiful country. And there were these big apartments. It was different than what we'd been dreaming about. But after awhile we got used to it—it's a good country.

"When I first came here I worked in restaurants for a few years. I had a little newspaper background in Albania. And after Albania was occupied by Italians we felt that Albanians in America should play a role to make Albania free again. That's why we formed the Free Albania Organization and started an Albanian

newspaper. I have been working with *Liria* 33 years. I was the founder of the paper. Also I had to work to take care of my mother and my younger brother, so I was working on a job and also on an organization paper. When one of the editors who was in charge for a couple of years left, I took charge and have been editor since. We have our correspondents all over. We don't mix up with politics too much. This is more of a culture and social organization, to get Albanians together and keep the ethnic group as much as we can.

"I moved to South Boston after I got married about 20 years ago. Many Albanians were here and the church was here. I live two streets in back of the church. I walk to church on Sundays. Most of the other people living in South Boston, they walk. They're near. But many Albanians don't go to the Albanian Church and we feel sorry about that too because we don't have more than 400 or 500 members. But when they need the church they always come. When they get married or somebody dies, they go to church.

"I like South Boston. I never had any problems. It's friendly. You have to live with people. If you're bad, they'll be bad to you, so that's the way it goes. Here there are Lithuanians, Estonians, Polish and of course, Irish. We are friendly with each other, greeting each other. Everybody keeps to themselves. Lithuanians keep with Lithuanians; Italians keep with Italians; the Irish keep with the Irish. Of course there are occasions that we get together. Sometimes they come to our affairs, like our annual picnic—3,000 people, Irish, Italians, everybody. We have our customs, they have their customs. We have our church, they have their church. But there's no conflict whatsoever. Albanians are very noble and gentle people. They don't like any trouble. Some Albanian boys and girls, they married outside, and they bring their husbands or wives to our organizations. They enjoy themselves."

A well-known librarian, DR. WILLIAM FITZGERALD moved out of South Boston during the Depression; it took him

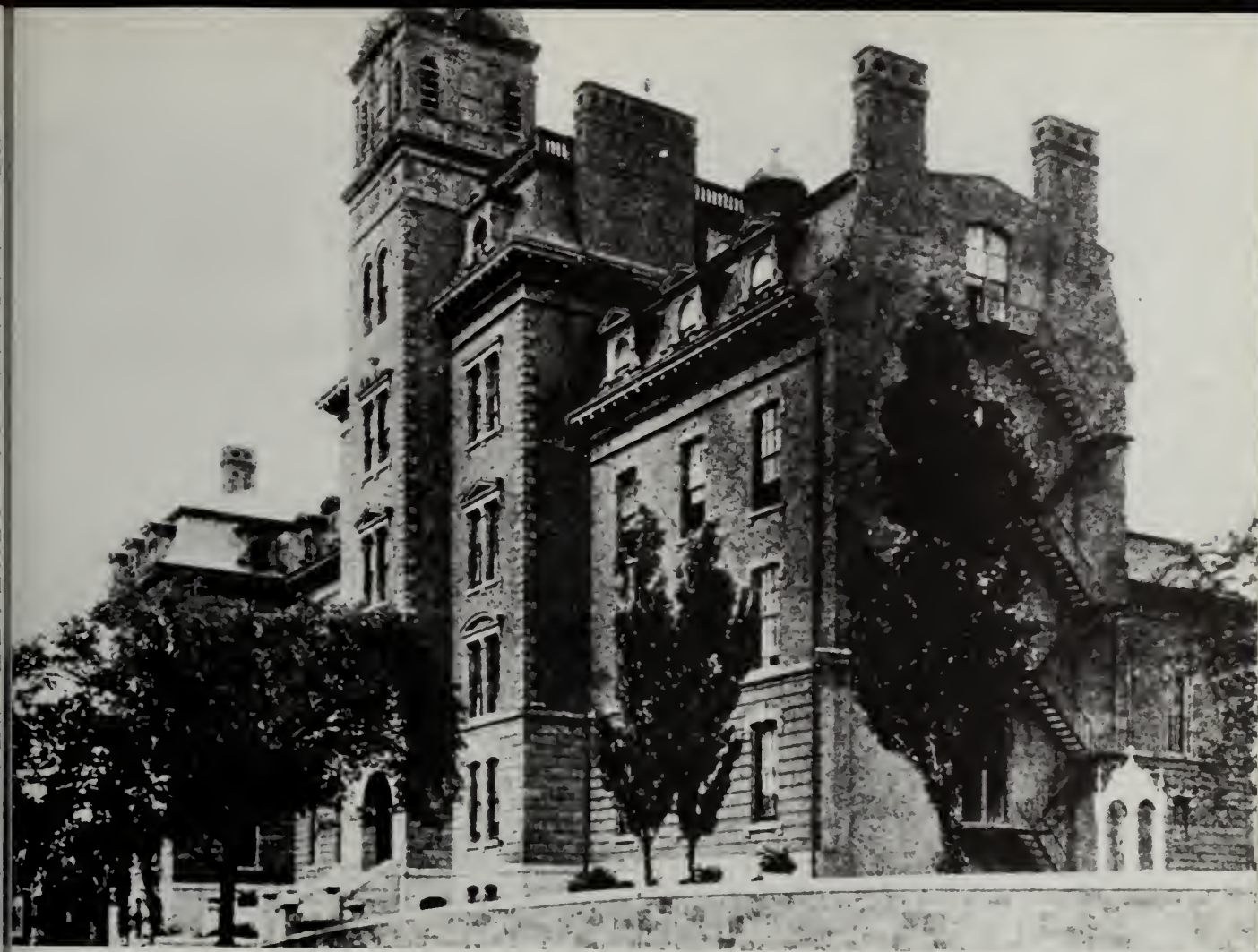
40 years to get back. In the meantime, he has traveled around the globe, teaching and administering libraries in China, Hong Kong, North and West Africa. His parents, grandparents and great-grandparents all lived in South Boston:

"I lived in my grandparents' home until I was 20. I never had much money, but it didn't bother me. I always had affection and enough to eat. As a youngster, I always enjoyed walking. I still do. Very few people in this community had automobiles. They were just coming in. This was a summering place. We had the Peninsula Hotel and people came from all over and spent two weeks or a whole summer. Ladies and gentlemen came without cars and stayed. They took their meals there or at the Head House. The Head House in those days had a restaurant.

"On Sundays you couldn't do much of anything. Public ball playing was forbidden. And shops were not open. The bakery might open for an hour or two. I used to go to church three times, not because I wanted to necessarily, but because that was just one of the things you did. In the morning I'd go to Mass and I'd go to Sunday school in the afternoon and then we'd have vespers in the late afternoon or early evening.

"When I was small there were still many areas that were vacant lots. There was a cow pasture up beyond the brewery with a spring. I used to drink out of the spring and cows would pasture there. People don't believe it now. Then all of a sudden there was a building explosion. Broadway looked very different then. Broadway was residential practically all the way to Dorchester Street. You might have had doctors' offices. The doctors' row ran from around G Street and H Street. And there were rather flourishing furniture stores and other stores down around E Street. But most of those are gone due to the development of the big department stores. At one time people locally would buy in their own neighborhood.

"Very often people have the misinformation that this was highly an Irish community. It wasn't at all. There were people of many ethnic backgrounds. There



Carney Hospital

were many people who were British or Scottish. In the community when I was small we had a very important Unitarian Church, three Episcopal churches, and about seven Catholic churches. One is closed, one is almost ready to close so there were more people around and more diversification.

"There was a big German colony here and all the bakeries were operated by Germans. There was particularly one big brewery here which had attracted the Germans to come to work. On almost every streetcorner there was a bakery run by Germans.

"Our whole way of living has changed. Things





Head House and Beach, turn of the century



were simplified in so many ways because we didn't have much in the way of refrigeration so your food depended a great deal upon the season. And very few people had any electrical appliances. The iceman came regularly to fill up the chest and keep it cold. Practically all the icemen came from Nova Scotia. There were many Germans here. A number intermarried and moved away. They had their own church over on Shawmut Avenue. They had two schools. It was a goodly size colony. And they were interested in things like music. They had the Arion Hall, an old fashioned German place where they could have a beer and dance and have music.

"The Germans that I knew of lived in the neighborhood of the Suffolk Brewery—that was at Eighth and G Streets. It took in right down to Columbia Road. Boy, I smelled the hops!

"Later on many groups of Italians moved in. They tended to live around First and Second Streets down below G, E, F. Many of the people of Irish background were scattered all over the area. The Albanians came in great numbers. At the moment we have three Albanian churches. And Lithuanians and Poles. We have a strong Lithuanian church and a Polish church. There was never a great number of Jewish people here, but they did have a school, a training school. Many of the Jewish people here ran little shops.

"Things are very different from when I was growing up. When I was a child, for instance, we had trees all down these streets. But then the street was widened and the trees were chopped down and not replaced. At the head of the street here at Independence Park, we had a magnificent fountain, we had trees, benches, flowers. It was just a joy to go up there and sit when people had more time to sit before television kept people home. And you'd have people with baby carriages and all that. Now it's just a desolate waste and that is the fault of the City. It's not my idea of a park. It's a shame the way the trees have disappeared. All of Broadway, both sides of the street had trees. It made it

much cooler and cleaner and much more attractive."

Strikingly handsome with a shock of snow-white hair and laughing blue eyes, JOSEPH KENNEALLY charms acquaintances with his ready humor and quick energy. Retired as a manager for the John Hancock, he walks seven miles a day, all year long, meeting friends who call him "the Mayor of Castle Island." A former L Street Brownie, he swims daily from May to October. He has been married for 31 years to the former Catherine Owens, a third-generation South Bostonian.

"My parents met here in South Boston, although they came from the same town, Ballyduff, in County Waterford. They may have known each other in Ireland, but the romance began here.

"They came to the United States for the simple reason that the economic situation in Ireland was not very feasible for making a living and for bringing up families because of landlord tyranny. So they came to this country where the opportunities seemed to be greater.

"My father was a farmer in County Waterford. My mother worked as a maid in Lismore Castle, which is on the River Blackwater.

"They both came over in the Cunard steerages, the cheapest form of passage. My Aunt Mary was here before my mother. She had a job as a maid, working for Judge Fallon. He lived in that big house at Broadway and N Streets, that used to be St. Brigid's convent. So Aunt Mary got my mother work in the Judge's house.

"The Judge's wife was rather frugal. Now one of the things Mrs. Fallon was critical of my mother, was that she was too generous in the meals she prepared, and as far as she was concerned, there was a waste. So this particular day Mrs. Fallon was supervising my mother and saying, 'Let's see now, we'll have potatoes. The judge will eat a half and I will eat a half and my sister who is visiting me will have a quarter of a one. Now how much of a potato do you want, Mag?' My mother says, 'Put all the whole damn things in there!' and she took them and dumped all the potatoes in the

pot. So as a result, that was the last job she had with Judge Fallon.

"My mother lived on Third Street when she first came, a block from where we live now. In this area, most of the people were from Cork or Waterford. There were very few Galway people. The Galways were down around C, D, B Streets, around Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Vincent's churches. I can remember as a kiddo going down there and hearing the people talk to each other from window to window in Gaelic. Just as we would expect Italians that came over to talk to each other. But up our way they didn't speak Gaelic at all. Only when they had a big secret. There was a kind of kidding rivalry between the people from different counties. The Galways were referred to as the Gunners, and Tips, from Tipperary, Kerry Goats, Cork Stoppers. The Galway people always claimed they were more pure Irish than others because they still spoke Gaelic. They were a fishing people, and the others were more or less rural people. But they finally mingled. But I don't think any of them came over with any great degree of education.

"They came over without any real idea of what they were going to do. They took any kind of job they could get, as long as they could make some money. Jobs like construction, which in those days were menial jobs, and factory workers. My father's first job was at the Walworth Manufacturing Company on First Street. He carried melted brass in a wheelbarrow. My mother always said that was how his hair turned white. It was a difficult job. He got nine dollars a week. Later he got a job working for the City, Public Works Department.

"While we, as second generation, never had too much, I'd say we had a great deal more than they had in the Old Country. My parents saw to it that I went to school and got an education which they didn't get in the Old Country.

"One of the things we had in St. Brigid's Grammar School was Irish History. I used to bring that Irish his-

tory and read it and my father would read it with me and then he would elaborate on the various things the Irish history told. There were things about the Potato Famine and the English landlords and what they did. So I can say that growing up they gave me a greater awareness of the problems of Ireland and a great love of Ireland.

"After my father left Walworth's he worked for the Public Works Department, which was quite an improvement. He drove a swill wagon. He was proud of his horses and took good care of them. I don't know if he was appointed by Curley, but I do know that the loyalty my father and his associates had for Curley was the reverence they would have for a saint. They enjoyed working for Curley because they thought they had a friend in the City. Maybe it was for political purposes, but at least he organized them and helped them. Years ago, they had huge outdoor rallies. I can remember being a child on my father's shoulders at Flood Square when James Michael Curley was running for governor. It was so important to my father that I also see Curley, I can remember being on his shoulders late in the evening probably half asleep when Curley made his arrival. When I was much younger I took active part in politics, speaking for candidates. I can remember the open air rallies at various corners and crowds of people even at two and three o'clock in the morning listening to the candidate. The men running for office now don't get that audience; they go out on house parties or a house-to-house canvas to acquaint the people with what they're trying to push over but when I was growing up politics was like a baseball game or a football game.

"I went to school at Saint Eulalia's—St. Brigid's now. We were the first class to go all the way through the school—nine grades. The Sisters of Charity were good teachers. They had it going for them though because if parents ever heard of your giving them trouble you got taken care of. If a Sister ever gave you a whack or hit you over the hand with a ruler and you



Boulevard and Beach, turn of the Century

went home and told your parents about it you'd get another whack.

"I started working the end of my sophomore year in high school in Western Union as a routing aide. A routing aide is a person that used to bring the messages to the telegraphers where they would transmit them to other parts of the country. It was only supposed to be for the summer and then fall came and my mother

called up the employment manager and asked if there was any possibility of my being considered part-time. They gave me a part-time job and so I finished my last two years of South Boston High School working part-time where I finished school about 2:30; I'd go in and work from about 3 to 8:30 at the Western Union.

"I continued working even during the Depression. A lot of people worked for the WPA, or on state con-



Outside L Street Recreation Center

struction jobs. I don't remember a great deal of hardship in the neighborhood. The immigrant people trained their children—the first thing to do was get a steady job. The second generation became better educated. They took civil service examinations. We then found sons of immigrants getting jobs as policemen, firemen, city workers, civil service jobs. Things that the doors had been closed on in years gone by. I worked

for an insurance company, something that would formerly have only been available to Yankees. So for the young men and women of the 1940's, working conditions had changed considerably from when I was a boy."

ALEXANDRA MORIARTY, a maternal woman with strong features and a hypnotic voice, was displaced from her



Patrick Walsh and children at Carson Beach, 1930's

Lithuanian homeland during World War II. She found a second home and friends in South Boston, a home she misses since moving to Quincy a few years ago. South Boston remains the center of her social life, and she is a familiar figure in the Lithuanian community here:

"Most of the Lithuanians settled in South Boston and Lawrence where the industries were.

"They escaped because they were persecuted. The czars forbade us to speak and to teach our children writing and reading in Lithuanian. Many smuggled Lithuanian books and written material from one farm to another, from one family to another to preserve our language, to preserve our history and to teach the youth in our own native language. And those who could escape came to the United States because it was the only country where you have freedom.

"One came, then he brought his wife and then the children came and then the aunts and uncles. And once one settled down, their relatives came all around and the relatives brought their relatives and friends and that's how the community started to grow.

"The first Lithuanians when they came here were all very young, in the prime of life. They established choirs, drama, theaters. And they had their Saturday dancing and picnics. They sang in the church choirs. They had wonderful cultural grounds, stronger than we ever could.

"We are the newcomers they call displaced persons. I came in 1949, June 15. I stayed three days over our friends' place and then we got a little apartment in South Boston. I went to clean some offices. And my husband was plucking feathers. He was a rag man with a pushcart and used to collect old pillows and mat-

tresses—my husband, a graduate from the university with a law degree, but he couldn't speak English.

"The first Lithuanians came. They were not intellectuals, but they had such great spirit and love and they built churches, convents. They produced educated priests and nuns.

"And then the second generation who came with all their education did not achieve by far what those first Lithuanians did, because we got more materialistic. Maybe because we lost so many years under the regimes . . . we lost our most beautiful years, so now we establish our families, we work, we get houses.

"The second generation that came—those people already had the opportunity to go to school, to educate themselves. They were officers, engineers, architects, professors, doctors. A new generation of intellectual people mostly. But because of the situation, not knowing the language, they grabbed any kind of job they could. But they educated themselves in the meantime. And because they were intellectuals they started to organize, all kinds of organizations to preserve our Lithuanian culture, so it would not die. Today we have almost 35 organizations.

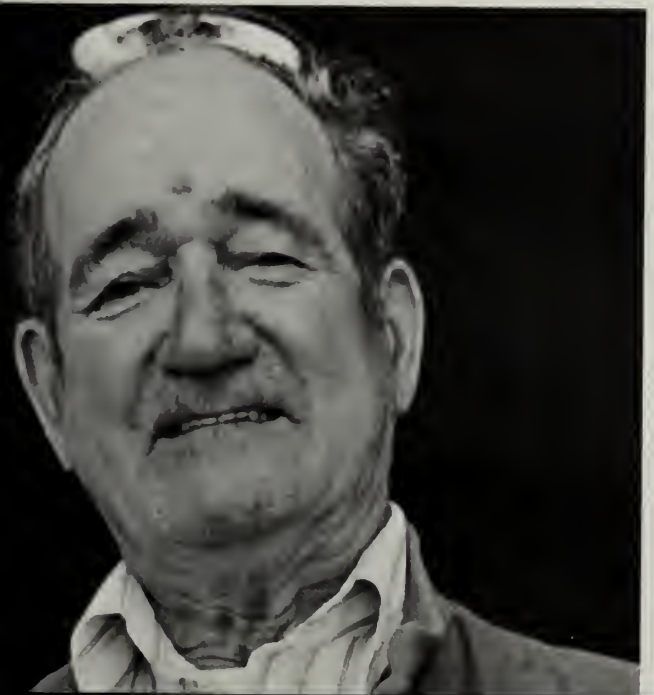
"We have the Lithuanian Citizen Association, Lithuanian Veterans Organization. Then we have Knights of Lithuania—their headquarters are all in South Boston. And we have Lithuanian Boy Scouts, a very big organization, and Lithuanian Girl Scouts which is separate—sea explorers, folk dance groups, drama club. We have three radio hours and we have a newspaper.

"Then we have a Lithuanian grammar and high school on Saturdays. This is a Saturday school, that only is taught in Lithuanian about Lithuanian history, culture, geography, language.

"When I came first 25 years ago, the streets were cleaner, the houses more well-kept; but we still love South Boston because it reminds us of the first days when we came to America. It's dear to us because here

is our pulsating heart, our whole life. We have here all our participation, our banquets, our festivities, our Independence Day celebration.

"You know, nostalgia, that is a sickness that nobody can cure. When we lived here, all Lithuanians in South Boston, we were very very happy; but we got richer, we bought beautiful homes—I give my example. I live in Quincy. I have a most beautiful mansion, but I am lonely at heart and I ask myself, why? What happened, how come I am unhappy? And you know why, because in the next house, I don't know who lives there. I've been living here four or five years and I don't know who my next door neighbor is. I miss my Lithuanian people. I'd rather live in two rooms that have my next neighbor Lithuanian. When I open up my window, I could say hello, how are you or good morning. This is a kind of security. We lost already our country and over here we are losing the touch of each other and we don't know the other nationalities. And I think that's why the new generation is so insecure. Because they do not belong to anything. This one is Italian. This one is Greek. This one is French. This one is German. This one is Lithuanian. Each one comes into their house, shuts the shade down, closes the door and this is our castle, and the heck with the other ones. And the young people, young boy, young girl, they go on the street. He walks around the corner to the drugstore. That's the only place he can communicate. They are lonesome. They don't have, and they are torn apart. An Irish, my husband, he belongs in South Boston: this is his heart. He moved out and he has a beautiful house, but he is so unhappy up there because he is missing his people. Lithuanians now all are astray and far away. And we are unhappy. One has pain in here, other one has pain here and they don't know what is the matter. You know what is the matter—they are suffering from nostalgia. They are missing their country, number one, and they are missing their own people."





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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The experience and insights of many South Boston residents contributed to the making of this history. We would like to thank especially Ms. Deborah Insell and her bicentennial class at South Boston High School, 1974, who conducted most of the interviews for this project, Miss Marjorie Gibbons of the Boston Public Library and the staff of the South Boston Branch Library, the South Boston Historical Society, Mrs. Anna Morris, president, John Markuns, Jim Witkin, and the following participants:

Ann Aicardi, Joseph Alecks, Mary Andruskiewicz, Pauline Bowler, Professor Thomas Brown, Adeline Butler, Evelyn Carey, Gerard Carey, Anna Cataldo, Sadie Caulfield, Debbie Champagne, Margaret Clasby, Fr. J.P. Coffey, Alan Doherty, Ann Dwyer, Martha Engler, Dr. William Fitzgerald, Eulalia Geary, Josephine Gerald, Mike Graves, Rita Graul, James Green, Steve Griffin, Arthur Gulinello, Helena Hanson, Debbie Healy, Helen Jenkins, Gertrude Katsos, Norman Kaupp, Karen Kazmowski, Patricia Keefe, Joseph Kenneally, Mabel Kerwin, Debbie King, George King, J. Irving Kowalker, Jack Kowalski, Ann Leonard, John McCarthy, Margaret McLean, Larry Mackin,

Dennis Manning, Robert Marion, Edward Matioska, Kathy Mikshenis, Margaret Mitchell, Alexandra Moriarty, Rita Mulkern, Edward Mullen, Thomas Neville, Isabel Newton, Dhmitri Nikolla, Mary Norton, Bev O'Connell, Dan O'Leary, Diane Perkin, Mildred Polansky, John E. Powers, Ethel Provenzano, Mary Reilly, Anna Sargavakian, Rose Sarkesian, Anna Scleparis, Elizabeth Shea, Nina Solomita, Janice Sweeney, Josephine Swirbalus, Susan Todd, William Toland, Scott Tuttle, Ella Tew Walsh, Patrick Walsh, Eric Wartmaugh, Jean Weinshel, Esther Wilson, Maureen Wright, and the L Street Seniors.

PHOTO CREDITS: Michael Harrity, Boston Architectural Center, designer of the South Boston Neighborhood Exhibit, the Print Department of the Boston Public Library, the Boston Globe, the Bostonian Society, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Eleanor Morrissey, and J. Irving Kowalker.

SPONSORS: The Boston Neighborhood Histories Project was made possible through the support of: The Blanchard Foundation, the Godfrey M. Hyams Trust, the Massachusetts Bicentennial Commission, Workingmens Co-operative Bank, and the people of the City of Boston.

Boston enjoys an international reputation as the birthplace of our American Revolution. Today, as the nation celebrates its 200th anniversary, that struggle for freedom again draws attention to Boston. The heritage of Paul Revere, Sam Adams, Faneuil Hall and Bunker Hill still fire our romantic imaginations.

But a heritage is more than a few great names or places—it is a culture, social history and, above all, it is people. Here in Boston, one of our most cherished traditions is a rich and varied neighborhood life. The history of our neighborhood communities is a fascinating and genuinely American story—a story of proud and ancient peoples and customs, preserved and at the same time transformed by the American urban experience.

So to celebrate our nation's birthday we have undertaken to chronicle Boston's neighborhood histories. Compiled largely from the oral accounts of living Bostonians, these histories capture in vivid detail the breadth and depth of our city's complex past. They remind us of the most important component of Boston's heritage—people, which is, after all, what the Bicentennial is all about.

KEVIN H. WHITE, *Mayor*



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